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Murdoch: not a gentleman

LAST WEEK Margaret Thatcher made what she may come to regret as one of her most serious errors of judgment. As she and her colleagues discussed the question of Mr Rupert Murdoch's takeover of Times Newspapers Limited, which they approved this week, the Prime Minister expressed the opinion that Murdoch was 'ideologically sound'. This view must have been based almost exclusively on her knowledge of his newspapers in this country. If the Prime Minister delved at all into Mr Murdoch's proprietorships elsewhere she would discover that he can withdraw political support as quickly as he gave it and he will use his newspapers shamelessly to advance his other business interests. And if she, or anyone else, believes that he will behave differently in Britain because he has promised to do so, the record shows a third thing about Mr Murdoch: he gives undertakings merely as a tactical convenience.

The case against Mr Murdoch — which we deal with in some detail later in this issue — is not essentially partisan. The British newspaper industry is now confronted with a man quite unlike anything it has seen before. The Rothermeres, Beaverbrooks and Astors of this world knew —and their proprietorial descendents know — why they are in newspapers and they have stuck pretty unswervingly to their political purpose. For them business was a means to the control of newspapers for political ends. For Rupert Murdoch it is the other way round: newspapers are a means to his business ends and political allegiances are secondary to this grand purpose.

This aspect of Murdoch's proprietorship has not been much on show in Britain, where he has had few non-newspaper interests. A major restriction on him must have been the fact that until last summer half the shares in his News International were publicly held in this country, so some of the old fashioned manners of the British establishment prevailed. But since that company's reorganisation last year it has been under the complete control of Murdoch's Australian company.

And it is to Australia and America that one must look to see something of the true Murdoch style. At the moment the ideologically sound Mr Murdoch's papers are giving fulsome support to the Labour government of Mr Neville Wran in New South Wales. Last March the *Australian* — Murdoch's only near-quality paper —described Mr Wran on its front page thus:

> Every now and then a figure appears on the stage who has the presence and the impact to transcend our inherited or environmental inclinations and to force us, by the way he represents us, to look at the issues anew.

These were the views of the manager of Mr Murdoch's stud farm. At the time Murdoch, in partnership with Vernons and Kerry Packer, had, with the help of Wran, set up a gambling monopoly in New South Wales.

Murdoch has supported other Labour leaders in the past: his enthusiasm for Whitlam in 1972 was only beaten by the enthusiasm with which he turned his papers against the man in 1975/6. In one paper, the New South Wales *Daily Mirror*, the headline on one lead story was changed between editions from 'Gough's Promise Cheap Rents' to 'Gough's Panic Cheap Rents', with suitable changes in the story underneath. The staff of the *Australian* struck because of the bias of the paper in the election.

Now, in some senses, there is something attractive about Murdoch's style of business: he takes risks and backs hunches in a way in which Britain's ossified capitalism finds it hard to do. And it is not as though Britain has a press without bias, deeply entrenched through its structure of ownership, control, hierarchy and news gathering. But Rupert Murdoch is something quite different, from a different business culture; the gentlemanly agreements relied upon to control him only work when you're dealing with a gentleman. And whatever you say about Rupert Murdoch, no-one accuses him of being that.

Tim Gopsill reports on the new 'Grunwick'

Life's not so cosy in the suburbs

IN A SECLUDED office block in suburban Banstead, Surrey, a bitter struggle to unionise a small workforce has been raging for six months. The employers have been accused of behaving 'like Grunwick'. One of the recruiters has been sacked and is going to the Tribunal, claiming victimisation. What lifts this affair above the normal run is the employer, which is the trade union, the Confederation of Health Service Employees (COHSE).

Like many other unions, COHSE maintains a quasi-military command structure of 'officers' and 'staff' enforced to a level of such staggering pettiness as the number of beverages allowed each day: one ex-employee tells of his being the only 'dry' member at a meeting as all the officers present sipped coffee from the trolley.

Historically, pay and conditions in COHSE have been settled through a 'sweetheart' Joint Consultation Committee in which the staff and the officers negotiated separately with the management — the union executive, headed by right wing general secretary Albert Spanswick.

Many employees of the union in Banstead found this system unsatisfactory and some officers decided to join the white-collar union ASTMS. In an attempt to pre-empt trade union organisation Spanswick had proposed to merge the officers' and staff sections into one. Last summer Chris Perry, the press officer, and Jim Mallory, a reporter on the union's paper started to organise the staff into the clerical union APEX.

In August Spanswick heard of this recruiting campaign and was furious. He summoned Mallory back to the office when he was in the middle of a story at a local hospital; ninety minutes of shouting and table banging followed. He then wrote to Perry saying;

> It is for Mr Mallory and yourself to desist from approaching members of the Confederation among the staff.

In fact, Spanswick did not then know which of his employees were members of COHSE as, in defiance of the union's rule book, they had not been allowed to form a branch and were effectively disenfranchised from COHSE decision-making.

Perry and Mallory continued with their recruitment campaign, even though Spanswick refused to allow them to do so in office hours and refused to allow APEX staff to meet on the premises. He also refused to allow dual membership with COHSE; but this does not seem to have worked: with some of the Head Office staff of

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60 not in a union at all, at least 27 in COHSE and 37 in APEX, there must be some overlap.

SPANSWICK'S ATTITUDE to the recruitment campaign provoked the APEX organiser, Len Gristey, to write to him in October saying: .

> I expect employers like Grunwick to resist trade union organisation but do not expect the same thing from a fellow TUC-affiliated trade union.

Gristey expressed

> severe concern with the way in which persons who have taken a leading part in the recruitment have been badgered, shouted at and threatened.

Spanswick's reply to this letter six weeks later spoke of staff being 'intimidated' into joining APEX and of his 'understanding of the difficulties' if George Ward had been written to 'in the same tone as your letter to me.'

All this had been to no avail as on 28 October Spanswick's amalgamation plan was crushingly defeated at a staff meeting and the following day APEX was recognised. The first tentative negotiations took place last week.

But awkwardly stalking these talks is the ghost of Chris Perry, who was sacked on 12 December. COHSE claims he sacked himself by walking out after a row with his boss over the handling of a leaked DHSS memo on disciplining trade union activists in NHS managerial jobs. They claim this has nothing to do with the APEX recruitment campaign.

The memo received some publicity in the tabloids under 'Sackers Charter' headlines. Spanswick had vetoed publicity, preferring the confidential channels of correspondence with health minister Patrick Jenkin. However, the story got into a health trade paper and then into the *Daily Star*. Mike Somers, the secretary of the South East region — whose members had got hold of the memo in the first place — was formally warned by Spanswick for leaking it out. Last week Somers' region backed him and voted 'no confidence' in Spanswick, demanding an inquiry. Mr Spanswick — whom I have approached on four occasions — does not wish to talk about the affair. □

Rose Shapiro

Women in politics setback

THE 300 GROUP, launched last November with the aim of getting more women into Parliament, from an ostensibly 'all-party' base, has suffered major ructions which now puts its future in doubt. At the centre of the row is self-styled 'founder and chairman', Lesley Abdela, former advertising executive and Liberal candidate, who recently tried to disband the Group's steering committee and replace it with a smaller, hand-picked team. Labour and conservative women who were involved at the start have withdrawn their support. Many feminists have been antagonised by Abdela's explicit dissociation of the 300 Group from the women's movement.

The Group, whose sworn objective is to fill half the seats in the Commons with women, initially attracted much favourable publicity. The first cracks in the organisation appeared at its House of Commons launch on 25 November. Gwynneth Dunwoody MP, who had been asked to book a room and speak at the meeting, found the event 'embarrassing' and has had no more to do with the Group since then. It apparently had little idea of how local parties or parliamentary procedure were organised, says Dunwoody: 'People who came genuinely wanting to get women into Parliament felt conned'; the atmosphere resembled 'a middle-class tea party'.

No less disappointed was Maureen Colquhoun (MP for Northampton North until the last election), who had been a member of the Group's steering committee from the outset. At the launch, however, attempts were made to stop her sitting on the platform with the other members of the committee, apparently because she was known to be a lesbian. 'We don't want people like you sitting on the platform', one Group member told her just before the meeting. When Colquhoun demanded an explanation, Abdela claimed she had no choice: 'I had so many representations about your association with the 300 Group.'

Colquhoun sat on the platform nonetheless — and was determined that the matter should be discussed when the Group's steering committee next met. However, Abdela had other plans — in effect, to sack the committee. In a letter dated 4 December she informed all committee members that she would now 'pick a committee of not more than seven people with whom I can work'. There would be no further meetings of the original steering committee, but instead a 'get-together of people who have been at one or two meetings'.

The 'get-together', as the minutes of 10 December record, 'sincerely apologised to Maureen for the hurt she had sustained as a result of the hasty and ill-judged decision'. It took issue with the 'extremely undemocratic' nature of Abdela's letter, and passed a resolution (by eight votes to one) confirming that the women present were indeed the 300 Group's steering committee.

According to Lesley Abdela, the committee structure is being worked on and discussed at the moment; she was unable to say whether her written intention to 'personally pick' its members would be realised. There are now signs of diversification. A publicity sheet for a mock 'debate' in the House of Commons on 11 March comes from 'The Mill House Group', named after Abdela's Oxfordshire home. Membership of this new group 'will be at the invitation of Lesley Abdela' and its existence 'will enable the 300 Group to seek charitable status as a separate and purely educational instrument' Applications for funds for the 300 Group (which, says Abdela, needs some £20,000) are still being considered by the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Rowntree Trust. The women's sections of both the Labour and Conservative Parties are now no longer involved. The only major political party which remains fully involved is the Liberal Party, many of whose members continue to support and work with the 300 Group. □

Mary Holland on Ulster's unemployment

Dole for 1 in 5

THIS WEEK'S unemployment statistics indicate that Northern Ireland is now facing long term economic disaster. Over 17 per cent of the work force is unemployed: once that kind of figure used to apply to Catholic towns like Derry, now it engulfs the province.

The Northern Officer of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, Terry Carlin has described the Thatcher government's policies as 'criminal' in their implications for the provinces economy and this judgment is endorsed by other sources. Last week a report by the firm of accountants, Coopers and Lybrand, predicted that unemployment could reach 21.5 per cent by the end of this year. It also warned that the shrinking of Northern Ireland's industrial base which has occurred could affect its ability to take advantage of the promised economic recovery when it comes to the rest of the UK.

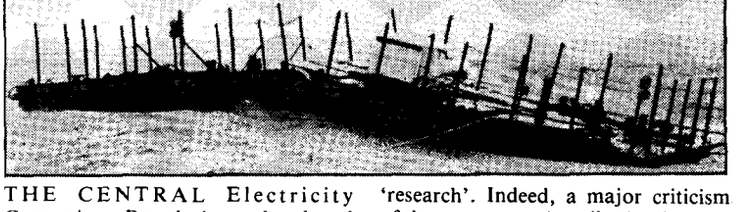
It was inevitable that Ulster's traditional industries, such as shipbuilding and engineering, would be badly hit by the recession. But in addition whole new industries, like man-made fibres, have virtually collapsed. In 1974 this industry alone employed 9,000 people in Northern Ireland. That number has shrunk to 2,500 and is expected to drop even further in coming months.

Ever since the start of the present troubles British governments have accepted that Northern Ireland should be treated as a special case. This wasn't just because the province started with some of the worst levels of social deprivation in the United Kingdom. It also made political sense. Money spent on creating and preserving jobs kept young people out of the para-military organisations and gave a sense of hope to the community which prevented further political alienation.

In the first years of the Thatcher government, Westminster was persuaded that exceptions should still be made. But as the recession has cut deeper on the mainland MP's of all parties have started to question the aid given to Northern Ireland. The implications of this could be grave: in the past the worst of the violence has always come from areas of high unemployment. Until now these have been Catholic; in future, increasingly, they will be Protestant as well. □

David Ross reveals a change in energy policy

Good-bye to a non-nuclear future



THE CENTRAL Electricity Generating Board has abandoned serious consideration of benign renewable energy sources as an alternative to the development of nuclear power. Their tactic is to switch resources to wind power, away from wave power, the one alternative which could in the words of Mr Glyn England, the CEGB chairman, 'supply the whole of Britain with electricity at the present rate of consumption'.

Only last October the CEGB Director of Information wrote to the *New Statesman*, denying that the Board was encouraging the cut-back in wave energy expenditure:

> It (the Board) fully supports the programme of research and development into renewable energy sources such as wave power,

he wrote. Now an official CEGB pamphlet by the head of generation studies, Dr John Wright *(Progress on Renewable Energy Sources)*, says the CEGB's 'present preference' is for wind power although 'until recently, we had set most store on wave power'. However, wind power is very much regarded as a secondary contributor: 'Wind turbines are unlikely to replace other power stations to a significant degree.'

The pamphlet also makes a number of factual errors. It talks of 'development' of wave energy but all current experiments are tiny — 1/150ths scale toy boats in elaborate bath tubs — and they come under the heading of 'research'. Indeed, a major criticism of the government's policy has been its unwillingness to cross from research to development, committing considerable sums of capital to the building of full-scale prototypes.

The pamphlet says the government 'has been spending £4 million a year on establishing the potential of wave power'. According to a written answer in the House of Commons on 30 October total expenditure between 1975 and 1980 was £5,670,000 — just over £1 million a year.

In the current financial year, it is true, the government says spending is 'expected to be £4 million'. In practice, the money is unlikely to be spent because the government is pulling back from investment in the most advanced inventions and concentrating on small-scale research into newer devices.

It is claimed that the retreat from wave power is because of its expense and difficulty. But, in fact, the technical difficulties (for instance, the power take-off of Salter's Duck and the hinge on Cockerell's Raft) have been solved. And official estimates of cost have fallen in the last two and a half years from 20-40p a unit to below 10p a unit for four devices.

As to wind energy the CEGB has made it clear that it believes that land-based aero-generators would be unacceptable in a small island like Britain and sea-based wind turbines are only 'an important long-term insurance technology . . . in reserve'. Soon the CEGB will be saying that their 'preference' for wind power has revealed the difficulties and there is only the nuclear alternative. □

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A special correspondent

Seamen strike over safety

THE CHANCES of the National Union of Seamen's industrial action succeeding increased sharply this week with the sixth largest shipping company — Canadian Pacific — agreeing to their key claim — that overtime should be paid at time and a half instead of time and a quarter.

The current dispute is, above all, about the safety on merchant ships. It does not take much imagination to see that life as a sailor is not a merry tour of the glamourous ports in the world. More often merchant seamen are visiting lonely crude oil loading bays and savouring the sights of windswept gantry cranes. Basic pay is £64 for an irregular 40 hours with 30 or so hours of average weekly overtime paid at time and a quarter. To earn approximately the equivalent of a shoreside manual worker a merchant seamen has to work about 66 hours a week.

With seamen often working in exhausting conditions — such as hot engine rooms — the result of this system is fatigue and high accident rates. Latest Department of Trade figures for 1978 show that engine room deaths per 100,000 at work were 24 compared with 12 in construction. Including deck ratings and officers the death rate is 109 per 100,000 compared with 25.4 in coal mining. This does not include losses from disease, suicide, homicide and loss at sea which brings the total to 293 per 100,000. Furthermore, this is treble the 1964 rate and double that of 1975.

The unions' response to this has been to maximise overtime pay so that the employers minimise overtime working. The owners have said that the current claim amounts to a 19 per cent rise. However, overtime working has already declined by an average of six hours and the employers proposal to pay time and a half on Sundays alone may merely discourage Sunday working.

The owners have inevitably raised the spectre of firms giving up the British flag if costs rise. This is not new: the British fleet has lost a fifth of its ships in the last three years and 8,000 jobs. Selling the ships — even at rock bottom prices — is not always a bad move for western shipowners: they can be chartered back from the new owners who are operating on lower costs, and then profitably deployed through London's Baltic Exchange. And historically this is the shipping companies' real skill.

THE FUNDAMENTAL problem is that shipping is at the card-sharp end of international capitalism. The cowboys can make money by hanging on to old ships as long as possible, with them registered under flags of convenience, whose governments have no ideas on job security, holidays, pensions and the like. And every 25,000 tons carried by one of these operators is 25,000 less for the safe, modern and efficient ships. The international recession has put even further pressure on rates: in 1978 transport accounted for 2.6 per cent of the cost of a barrel of refined oil, compared with 7.6 cent in 1965.

The result — as Lloyds underwriters will tell you privately — has been a massive increase in dubious claims in the past decade. Words like piracy and barratry have started appearing in the specialist maritime press, with particular reference to the South China Sea and the eastern end of the Mediterranean. One Cayman Island ship disappeared without trace in the Straits of Malacca after its Polish crew reputedly mutined. The Norwegian coast was recently engulfed in oil from a Greek ship, M-S-Spylis, killing 50,000 birds. The case will have to be fought in the Greek courts. Phillippino seamen have been dumped ashore in the rain at Bremen for daring to protest about not being paid for six months. None of this is what UNCTAD bureaucrats had in mind when they suggested giving the third world a large share of the world's shipping.

The problems the shipowners talk of are real enough and therefore so is their threat to flag out and join the competition in places such as Panama. However the National Union of Seamen would feel less cynical about protestations from the General Council of British Shipping on the cost of safety and training if the GCBS gave more support to the International Transport Federation's campaign to raise the international level of wages and vessel standards. □

Mick Hamer reports on

The return of conscription

COMMUNITY SERVICE enthusiasts have been considering whether to ask the government to introduce conscription for community work as a way of reducing the mounting unemployment figures. In an as yet unpublished report — dated September 1980 — the Commission on the Youth and the Needs of the Nation — an ad hoc new body with several prominent community service leaders — discusses the possibility of *compulsory community work* for school leavers. CYNN ideas have greatly influenced James Prior who last autumn announced his Community Enterprise Programme which replaced STEP.

Last year three members of the CYNN went to see Margaret Thatcher. Also at the meetings were Sir Keith Joseph and James Prior. Top of the agenda was the question of compulsory service.

The Commission's report, which formed the basis of their lobbying of the government, advocates a large extension of community service from helping old people in homes to cleaning up canal tow paths. The report also mentions civil defence and military service. It says the net costs of expanding community service work opportunities would be considerably less than gross costs. The report asks: Should community service work be compulsory? and proposes a number of measures to win acceptance of a comprehensive community service work programme, which include giving extra grants to undergraduates who have done community service and getting employers to give preference to those who have had service.

Elisabeth Hoodless, executive director of Community Service Volunteers, is a prime mover behind the Commission. Asked whether she ruled out compulsory service she said that there are a lot of points on either side which need to be looked at. She added that compulsion was an important element in young people's lives. 'Schools are compulsory, unemployment is compulsory for many.' □

Put up prices, please

Stephen Witt and Christopher Pass on increasing government income and improving wealth

SIR GEOFFREY HOWE could raise an extra £850 million in his budget this spring by restoring the 'real' price of tobacco to its 1965 level. This would mean adding 21p to a standard pack of 20 cigarettes.

Apart from giving the government extra money, such a price rise would do far more than any anti-smoking campaign to cut consumption. We estimate that *ten thousand million* fewer cigarettes would be smoked each year, and have allowed for this in our revenue calculations. There is thus no conflict of interest between public health and government income: both would be enhanced by a large increase in tobacco prices.

Since the Conservatives came to power, the price of a pack of 20 cigarettes has been increased by 10p as a result of government measures — half through the general increase in VAT in June 1979, and half through a specific increase in tobacco duty last year. Altogether taxation now accounts for almost three-quarters of the retail price of cigarettes; in the current financial year government revenue is expected to reach £3,200 million.

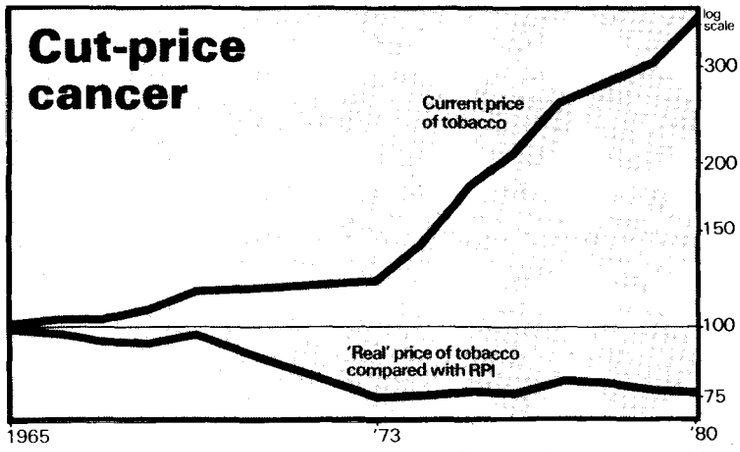
Cigarette smokers may be forgiven for thinking that they contribute enough to the nation's coffers; but in fact tobacco prices have risen by less than inflation over the past 15 years. Since 1965, retail prices generally have risen by 366 per cent, while tobacco prices have risen by 259 per cent. As the chart shows, the real price of tobacco fell sharply between 1965 and 1973. Since then it has broadly kept pace with general inflation, but not recovered the earlier 'lost' ground.

Adding 30 per cent to the price of tobacco — lifting a typical pack of 20 cigarettes from 70p to 91p — would close that gap.

To assess the effects of such an increase in government revenue we must take consumption into account. Clearly a sharp price rise would cause a reduction in the amount people smoke: the question is, how big a reduction?

Tobacco consumption peaked in the early 1960s. Since then it has declined by about ten per cent — with a sharp decline in the amount of smoking by men being offset by a gradual continued rise in smoking by women. (In 1961, for every 100 cigarettes smoked by men, 42 were smoked by women. By 1979 the ratio was 100 to 73.)

Disentangling long-term trends from short-term price effects, we estimate* that the price elasticity of cigarettes is —0.32: that is, for every one per cent increase in the price of tobacco, consumption declines by 0.32 per cent. We have used this figure to estimate the consequences of restoring the real price of tobacco to 1965 levels. On the same basis, a 5p increase in the price of 20 cigarettes would raise government revenue by £211 million, and a 10p increase would raise it by £417 million.



Although any announcement to raise prices would be prompted by the Government's wish to reduce public sector borrowing, there is another consideration. Since the early 1960s a plethora of reports in Britain and abroad have demonstrated the link between tobacco and cancer, bronchitis and heart disease.

In Britain, as in other countries, various attempts have been made to discourage smoking. This has taken two main forms. First, there have been various attempts to limit the amounts and types of promotion and advertising. Second, governments have conducted anti-smoking campaigns to publicise the dangers of smoking — they have employed television, press and poster advertisements, and instigated 'health warnings' on cigarette packets and advertising copy.

Our analysis of consumption behaviour, however, indicates that advertising and anti-smoking publicity have only a minimal effect on total cigarette consumption. In order to gain the health benefits of a *substantial* reduction in consumption, a considerable price rise is essential. □

*S. E. Witt and C. L. Pass: 'The effects of health warnings and advertising on the demand for cigarettes'; *Scottish Journal of Political Economy*, Vol 28, No 1, 1981.

Dr Witt and Mr Pass lecture on econometrics and business studies at Bradford University.

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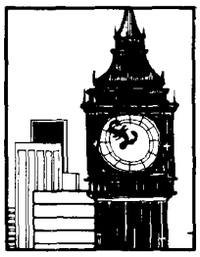


Peter Kellner, Political Editor

Has Foot learned from Keir Hardie?

I LOOKED HARD for something to be cheerful about at Wembley last Saturday. The nearest I got was when Michael Foot spoke at the end of the Labour special conference and told the following story:

> Now there was a predecessor of mine in this office of Leader of the Party, who on one occasion after Conference had reached a strange conclusion, said he couldn't abide by it . . . Now the issue at stake on that occasion was the extension of the franchise to women; and much to the amazement of some here I have to pass on the information that at one period the Conference in all its wisdom voted against that proposition. And Keir Hardie . . . was the one you know, and nobody dares breathe a word against him, do they?

For the first, and only, time in the conference there was genuine, relaxed laughter — not a nervous reaction to a well-turned piece of abuse from the rostrum, but a natural, unforced response to a practised orator. Foot had told a neat anecdote, and made a telling political point into the bargain: conference decisions were neither infallible nor immutable.

This week I pursued the story of Hardie's battle with the Male Chauvinist Delegates. I was sure it would intrigue many readers, improve my standing among the nation's feminists (something we *NS* journalists have to be very careful about these days) and provide a cautionary text with which to discuss the events of the past week.

How wrong I was. Or, rather, how right: but for somewhat unexpected reasons. Hardie's speech, to the 1907 party conference in Belfast, did indeed concern women's suffrage and 'the injustices inflicted upon women by our present laws.' Then Hardie said:

> The intimation I wish to make to conference is this: if the resolution which has been carried today is intended to commit the actions of the party in the House of Commons, I shall have seriously to consider whether I can remain a member.

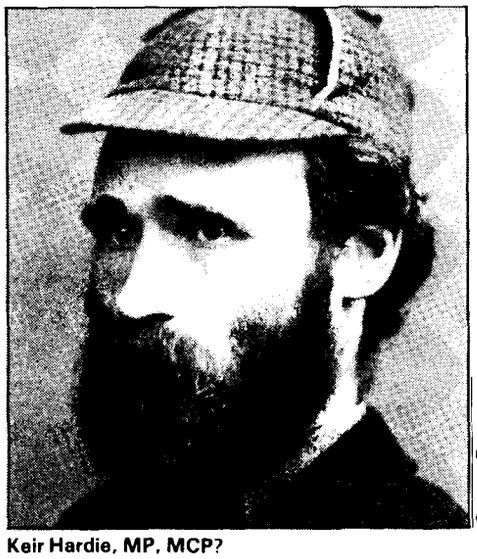
But what exactly was the conference decision that had prompted this extraordinary statement? It turned out to be an assertion that

> the time has arrived when equal voting rights should be extended to all men and women, and [this conference] is further of the opinion that any suggested means to extend the franchise with a property qualification to a section only is a retrograde step and should be opposed.

So what was Hardie getting worked up about? The answer, I am afraid, does not reflect well on Foot's sense of history.

In 1907 Keir Hardie was supporting a Liberal bill to extend the franchise to women on the same basis as men — that is, *including the property qualification that then applied*. Hardie did not consider universal adult suffrage, without the property qualification, to be an immediately attainable aim. What Hardie objected to was not, as Foot indicated, any opposition to women having the vote, but the very opposite: the conference wanted Keir Hardie to go further than he wanted. Not for the last time, it was the conference that was right, and the Leader of the Party who was wrong.

IF FOOT WAS wrong about Keir Hardie, he was right about Wembley. The conference took the wrong decision, and it ought to be changed. And the issues, ultimately, are the same as those in 1907: first, democracy distorted by expedience and purchased with property is wrong, and in the long run untenable; second, party leaders need watching.



Camera Press

Keir Hardie, MP, MCP?

There is a case in principle for widening the franchise for electing the leader of the Labour Party, and a case for giving the unions a say. Foot's preferred solution — 50 per cent for the MPs, 25 per cent each for the constituency parties and the unions — can be explained ('the vital democratic principle of the party in Parliament sharing responsibility with the party in the country . . .'). So could the National Executive proposal of giving the three groups 33 per cent each ('the three legs of Labour's tripod . . .') I am not saying these arguments are flawless, simply that they can be explained from first principles.

I defy anyone to justify what Wembley decided from first principles. It can certainly be understood in terms of tactics and block-vote cock-ups; and the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy did an admirable job in explaining the tactical position to arriving delegates. It can also be explained in terms of the trade unions' considerable financial muscle in the Labour Party. But it cannot be defended in terms of any known theory of modern western democracy — and, indeed, nobody on Saturday tried.

Perversely, the most hopeful thing about what happened at Wembley may have been the day's very awfulness. Had the 50-25-25 compromise been passed, the leadership issue would have slowly died. The gang of three, or four, or thirteen, would have organised an orderly departure from the party, and probably done it great damage.

Instead, the electoral college formula is so manifestly absurd that it will be discussed again at the next conference. In the months between it will be possible to explore the possibility of, and support for, one-member-one-vote in the constituency parties, and of bringing greater democracy to the trade union vote.

In the meantime, the Council for Social Democracy shows few signs of controlling its retreat from the Labour Party. It had planned to make its formal exit in May or June, after the local elections (which it would be in no position to fight if the split occurred sooner) and after some informal arrangement with the Liberals had been discussed.

It now looks as if, in the words of one of the Council's team of MP supporters, 'we may be stampeded by events into moving sooner'; and the result would then be a new party formed before, rather than after, a deal with David Steel. The timing will be crucial, for the creation of a new party on an incautious tide of enthusiasm is likely to be seen as a threat rather than a help by Liberal activists. The centre-left of British politics would start getting rather crowded and not a little scrappy.

Some of the Council appreciate the danger. They admit that any deal with the Liberals would be a marriage of convenience, principally aimed at securing proportional representation after the next general election. In the long run, the social democrats and the Liberals are certain rivals; now the long run may arrive this spring. But as one of the original gang of three optimistically put it to me: 'Damn it, if the crunch comes, we don't *need* the Liberals.' We shall see. □

A spaniel in the works

MEANWHILE, let us not ignore the horrors being perpetrated by the present government. Within the next fortnight a damning report on Thatcher's monetarism is likely to be agreed unanimously by the all-party Treasury and Civil Service Committee of MPs. But some ministers are still hoping that the committee can be unhorsed.

Their optimism stems from the recent ministerial reshuffle. One of the Tory MPs on the committee, Kenneth Baker, was appointed Minister of State at the Department of Industry. He consequently vacated his place on the committee, where he has been a tough interrogator of ministers and officials, scarcely concealing his Heathite sympathies.

Now his successor has been nominated: Jock Bruce-Gardyne, a monetarist who only this week gave Sir Keith Joseph a rough ride in the Commons over the government's new aid to Leyland. Bruce-Gardyne's weekly column in the *Sunday Telegraph* is one of the few regular newspaper features that Sir Geoffrey Howe can still look forward to with any real pleasure.

A number of Tory, as well as Labour, MPs on the committee view Bruce-Gardyne's nomination with some alarm. At the very least, they argue, shouldn't his appointment be delayed until after the monetarism report is published? After all, he hasn't been involved in obtaining or analysing the mountain of evidence the committee received last year.

So far Francis Pym, the Leader of the House, has avoided a row: Bruce-Gardyne's name appeared at the bottom of the order paper last week, but has not yet been brought forward for MPs to approve. With luck, the monetarism report will survive intact; but the chances are that it will never again produce a report that is both unanimous and hard-hitting. □

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FLEET STREET

Into the arms of Count Dracula

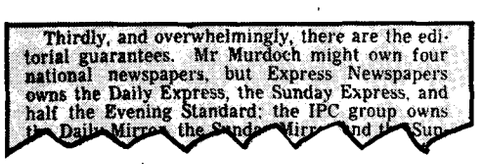
Do Rupert Murdoch's undertakings about the future of Times Newspapers mean anything? His record in Australia suggests not. BRUCE PAGE investigates.

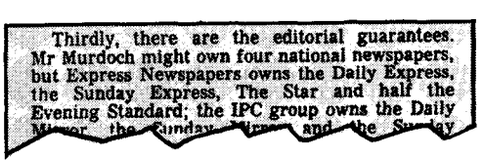
LAST SATURDAY afternoon, the *Sunday Times* composing room exhibited the disciplined chaos which is normal when the paper is going to press. But there was a novel presence: the compact, energetic figure of Rupert Murdoch, eager rescuer of the troubled *Times* group, and loudly-advertised guarantor — potentially, anyway — of the editorial independence of its newspapers.

He cast a sharp, professional eye over the page-proofs as they came up for checking. One in particular excited his interest: it carried a long leading-article stating the *Sunday Times'* public attitude to the takeover. The leader was friendly in tone, and had a passage dealing with proposals for a Monopolies Commission inquiry — something violently opposed by Murdoch.

Cogent arguments against such an idea were cited. But, as it seemed to Murdoch, they could be more cogent still. He, as the text said, 'might own four national newspapers, but Express Newspapers owns the *Daily Express,* the *Sunday Express,* and half the *Evening Standard* . . .' The leader-writer had omitted the *Star,* another Express possession.

The boss of News International scribbled on his proof, and beckoned a *Sunday Times* executive. The passage (see illustration) appeared in the final edition in the form which Murdoch preferred. (An argument justifying further


Thirdly, and overwhelmingly, there are the editorial guarantees. Mr Murdoch might own four national newspapers, but Express Newspapers owns the Daily Express, the Sunday Express, and half the Evening Standard; the IPC group owns


Thirdly, there are the editorial guarantees. Mr Murdoch might own four national newspapers, but Express Newspapers owns the Daily Express, the Sunday Express, The Star and half the Evening Standard; the IPC group owns the Daily

The Sunday Times leader before (above) and after (below) Murdoch's interference

monopoly through existing monopoly is shoddy enough: it becomes more so when a sick paper like the *Star* is counted against a money-spinner like the *Sun.*)

Thus, the *Sunday Times* leader which celebrated Rupert Murdoch's readiness to avoid interfering with *Sunday Times* leaders was one which Murdoch himself had checked, altered and approved. And it did not express in any serious way the doubts which many of the paper's journalists feel about the propriety, and necessity, of the News International takeover. (*The Times'* leader on Murdoch was also checked by Murdoch.)

For non-journalists, it's worth spelling-out that the composing-room is the critical area in a newspaper office. The idea of outsiders entering and checking-over references to their business deals is wholly unheard-of. And most proprietors — however slight their commitment to editorial independence — eschew personal interference in the process which occurs when the newspapers they own are converting judgments into type. Mr Murdoch, however, is something else again: he will do it to a newspaper even before he owns it. And it's against this background that Mr John Biffen, the Trade Secretary, should read News International's 'guarantees' about the future liberties of *The Times* and *Sunday Times.*

MURDOCH'S CHARM and energy are no doubt a refreshing contrast after Thomson's years of dreary blundering. But his record as a media operator shows that undertakings from him are meaningless without the force of law — and that law itself is no infallible barrier. Analysis suitably begins with a very clear-cut episode.

In summer 1979 his News Ltd acquired the TEN-10 television station in Sydney, NSW. Murdoch appeared before the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal, which regulates Australian television licences, and was naturally asked whether he planned to alter the station's policy, or replace its existing management. There was no observable ambiguity in his answers.

The results of the company, its ratings, and the service it was giving the public, were such that 'it would be madness to contemplate any changes at all . . . I wish to give an assurance to the tribunal that no change is contemplated . . .' Murdoch said that TEN-10's chairman, Sir Kenneth Humphreys, had done 'a magnificent job', adding

> . . . there has been so much industry hearsay that I am about to march in and fire everybody, which I hope I have laid to rest today.

The television company, he said, would remain 'totally independent', and News Ltd would 'not be interfering'. On August 10, the tribunal approved Murdoch's takeover.

On August 29, it was announced that TEN-10's general manager was being replaced by Brian Morris, a director of News Ltd. Just two months later Sir Kenneth Humphreys — in spite of the 'magnificent job' he had done — was replaced by Mervyn Rich, finance director of News Ltd. So much for 'industry hearsay'.

It was also industry hearsay around that time that Murdoch might be interested in adding to his new Sydney station a TV holding in Melbourne, Australia's other principal city. He was, in fact, questioned on this during the TEN-10 inquiry, and elaborately pooh-poohed the idea.

But by autumn 1979 he was involved in fast-and-furious share dealings which could have given him control of either one of two Melbourne TV stations — and might yet give him Channel ATV-10 Melbourne. At present, that bid is blocked: the tribunal having found that Murdoch, in setting it up, committed wholesale breaches of the law. It will be relevant, later, to note and explain the role in these dealings of the London merchant bankers Morgan Grenfell — if only because they pop up, later in the saga, as advisers to the editorial consortium which tried to make a rival bid for the *Sunday Times.*

Even more relevant, though, in terms of reading-matter for Mr John Biffen, is the tribunal's finding about the evidence which Murdoch gave on the independence of television stations under his command. This evidence, it said, was

> both internally confusing, and in some cases directly contradictory.

ON ANY PLAIN READING, Mr Biffen and his colleagues have set aside the law for the convenience of Mr Murdoch, and of the Thomson group which is so anxious to do business with him. National newspaper companies have a special position in British law: effectively, mergers between them are taken, prima facie,

Camera Press

Early days: 'a young Australian who has taken Fleet Street by storm'

to be against the public interest, and cannot take place without the approval of the Secretary of State. Section 59 of the Fair Trading Act (1973) says that

> The (Monopolies) Commission shall report to the Secretary of State whether the transfer in question may be expected to operate against the public interest, taking into account all matters which appear in the circumstances to be relevant, and, in particular, the need for accurate presentation of news and free expression of opinion.

Mr Biffen's argument has been based on the claim that Times Newspapers — plural — constitute a group in danger of collapse. But this has force only because of the Thomson Group's insistence that all the components of Times Newspapers must be sold together, on pain of simultaneous close-down in March.

This package, which came into existence only through a merger which the Monopolies Commission sanctified in 1966, contains several disparate items. One is *The Times,* a talismanic newspaper which has admittedly lost its market identity, and which in these bleak economic times may be losing £1 million a month. Another is the *Sunday Times,* which remains a spectacular market-place success: it is probably trading at a profit even now, and its long-term prospects (under competent management) make it one of the most valuable properties any large-scale publisher could desire. And different again are the supplements: one authentic

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gold-mine in the *Times Educational Supplement*, plus several interesting pieces of middle-sized periodical business.

When Thomsons first announced, last autumn, their decision to get out, it was admitted that the constituent parts of Times Newspapers could be — might have to be — sold separately. Only since December has the Thomson group insisted that this job-lot of newspapers sell together or die together. The government's acceptance of the Thomson diktat depends upon ignoring an essential prescription of monopoly legislation, which says that any affected newspaper must be considered *individually*.

The pressure thus generated — marriage is all, no matter if Dracula be the groom — delivers two of the world's most influential newspapers into the hands of a man whose record shows no fitness for any such custodianship. But, beyond that, it has created a Fleet Street market-power in which there is a short-term potential which has scarcely been appreciated — together with a capacity for long-term instability which has not been appreciated at all. ('Dracula' may seem a harsh, tabloid epithet. But consider how the 'Son of Sam' killings were treated in Murdoch's *New York Post*. HOW I BECAME A MASS KILLER said one headline, over a story by-lined with the name of 'Sam' suspect David Berkowitz. The author, in reality, was the new proprietor of *The Times*, who subsequently confessed that the headline had been 'inaccurate and wrong'.)

News International, which is the company containing Murdoch's British operations, principally the *Sun* and *News of the World*, has annual profits of around £25 million. No borrowing is required to deploy a cash-flow in excess of £30 million annually, and the bargain-basement price of Times Newspapers — nominally some £14 million, but probably far less in real terms — will be swallowed with no hiccup.

There are no minority shareholders to interfere with Murdoch's untrammelled control, and given that his gamble on swift redundancies at Times Newspapers comes off, then News International will be free to direct a lethal commercial fire against any selected section of the daily or Sunday market. Therefore, the condition of lonelier concerns like the *Guardian*, the *Observer*, or even the two *Telegraph* papers could swiftly become uncomfortable in a battle for survival.

And the battle could soon become that serious, for powerful imperatives will be acting upon Murdoch. In Australia his master-company, News Corporation, is in exactly the opposite position to News International, which it controls. After a long series of take-overs and new ventures — into television, publishing, gambling, transport and mineral exploration — it carries a burden of debt which at least equals its equity value. There is little or no flexibility for such a high-geared master-company if one or more of Murdoch's international gambles should run into serious trouble. *The Times* is now part of one of the most remarkable business combines in the world, and it is worth examining some of the recent manoeuvres which have given it its shape.

Keystone

Harold Evans (with his eyes closed) snuggles up to the new proprietor

RUPERT MURDOCH's international career began in 1968. A little-known newspaperman arrived in London and shocked the Stock Exchange by slaughtering one of its favourites, Robert Maxwell, in a bid over the *News of the World*. Murdoch, it transpired, encountering Maxwell elsewhere, had derived a simple, serviceable perception. If the great worlds of Fleet Street, the City, and New York considered Maxwell formidable, then these places must be an interesting concentration of soft, white underbellies.

Ten years, and many headlines later, the perception had brought Murdoch much success, and a rich crop of enemies. (Ruthlessness might once have appeared as a single strand in a complex character, but in the later Seventies, against the background of Murdoch's fierce struggle to keep the *New York Post* alive, it emerged as the dominant.) He remained, however, a tabloid publisher in essentials, and even in Britain long-term trends of profit and circulation do not favour tabloids. Murdoch became increasingly anxious for large expansion into fields new to the News Group. This, beginning with the purchase of Channel TEN-10 Sydney, set in motion the processes which have now produced a wholesale restructuring of the Murdoch empire.

Television 'hearsay' insisted that Murdoch would try linking his Sydney station to a Melbourne one, and the opportunity arose in autumn 1979, when the Ansett airline company became ripe for takeover. Murdoch's interest in aviation has been notorious, rather than regular: specifically, after the airline did fall to him, there was a remarkable 1980 sequence in which the US Ex-Im Bank produced dirt-cheap finance for Ansett's purchases at Boeing; President Carter produced lunch at the White House for Murdoch, and Murdoch's *New York Post* produced a primary-election endorsement for Carter (along with a campaign against Carter's rival Ted Kennedy which was cheapest and dirtiest of all). But the real lure in Ansett was its possession of Channel ATV-10 Melbourne.

That, back in 1979, was also the problem. Australian law says that someone in Murdoch's position — with TV licences in Adelaide and Brisbane, as well as Sydney — cannot buy more than five per cent of any other licence-holder without telling the Broadcasting Commission (and getting involved, thereby, in boring questions of the sort which drain the fun from any promising takeover).

Murdoch could only wet his feet by collecting a fraction under five per cent of Ansett through a subsidiary. Then, in early October, he dined

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in London with 'senior executives' of the merchant banks Morgan Grenfell and Hambros. Both have worked closely with Murdoch companies, but Morgan Grenfell the more consistently. Their chairman, Lord Catto, is on the board of Murdoch's Australian master-company.

Could they assist with Ansett? Well, said Murdoch, they might buy and hold some shares. And, taking up the suggestion, they bought five per cent between them.

NO SMALL AMOUNT of legal lungpower was subsequently expended by Murdoch lawyers in denying that the bankers' shares were under News Group control. Such a thing might imply that Mr Murdoch had been assembling television power in disregard of the spirit, even perhaps the letter of the law.

In truth, merchant bankers who buy shares to 'help' big clients usually handle the shares just as the client wishes. And, in the latter stages of a stormy set of tribunal hearings, it emerged that Murdoch himself had felt sufficiently in command of the shares to offer them to another businessman, Robert Holmes a'Court* (when he himself briefly lost interest in Ansett/ATV-10 and 'cleared the decks' for an abortive assault on the broadcasting-rich Melbourne *Herald* group).

Evidence on this knotty point was given by a lawyer named Martin Cooper, who is corporate planning manager for the Murdoch master-company, News Corporation. Secretary of State Biffen might find it useful to read the tribunal's assessment of Mr Cooper, as conveying some flavour of the News Group style under pressure:

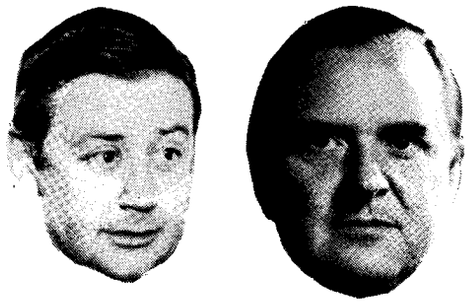
> We have been troubled by some of the evidence. . . particularly the reference to a 'power of sale'. . . It seems to us that references to the number of shares must have come from a News Group executive and probably Mr Cooper. We find it very difficult to accept his explanation. . . particularly his statement that the News Group file has been thrown away or destroyed. This leads us to having reservations about accepting other evidence from him. . .

On the available evidence, the tribunal thought, it wasn't possible to say more than that the London banks were expected to support the Murdoch position — which was not proof of a shareholding in contravention of the law.

But the tribunal also found that when Murdoch re-opened the Ansett love-affair in November/December 1979, there were *four* bursts of share-buying which did produce contraventions — by News Corporation, by one of its investment subsidiaries, by two Murdoch family investment firms, and also by Rupert Murdoch personally.

In each case the cause was similar: unconditional purchases were being made towards the control of Channel ATV-10. But News, already a large television proprietor, could not lawfully buy more TV shares without making all deals conditional upon Broadcasting Tribunal approval.

IN THIS CASE, the tribunal panel has undergone transmutation. In a first incarnation, it swiftly approved a large measure of *de facto* Murdoch control over the Melbourne station. But a successful High Court challenge to the panel's competence led to new appointments, and a fresh start. Inquiry consumed most of last year, and reasons for the block on Murdoch's takeover have only just been published.



Robert Holmes a 'Court (left); Lord Catto (right)

While disapproving of share-dealing irregularities, the tribunal says it would not block the bid on those grounds alone. A more basic concern was the Murdoch organisation style and the effect it would have on programming independence. Murdoch told the tribunal that he was able to have considerable influence on Channel 10, Sydney, even though he wasn't on the company's board:

> 'It would be unnatural if all the people there and working for me for a long time did not listen to me'.
>
> Our assessment . . . is that this (is) something of an understatement.

The tribunal was concerned about the effects of further common ownership on the 'unwritten' networking agreements between stations, and it was here they found Murdoch's evidence unsatisfactory. Although the News Corporation manager Martin Cooper said that legally-binding agreements had been considered for stations where the management might not be 'compatible', Murdoch said: 'No, that is not so.'

He also said that no 'four-city' show would be developed unless it was a 'unanimous' choice. But under cross-examination he changed this to 'more or less unanimous', and said there was 'a lot of give and take'. The tribunal concluded that

> the concentration of media interests by the News Group resulting from the common ownership of Sydney and Melbourne will have an adverse effect on the freedom of choice of the other members of the network, and is not in the public interest.

One of the first tests of Murdoch's attitude towards editorial independence in Britain will be his appointment of a new editor for *The Times*. It is believed in the highest reaches of Times Newspapers that the candidate which he has in mind is Mr Bruce Rothwell. Rothwell can reasonably be described as a trusted Murdoch aide, having taken a key part in several of his new and troublesome interests in the past. Within the traditions of *The Times* such an appointment would be hard to square with the undertakings Murdoch has given.

POLITICAL GOSSIP suggests that the staunch pro-Fraser bias of the Murdoch papers in last year's Federal election may deliver retrospective legislation to sanctify Murdoch's takeover — just as the *Sun's* support of Thatcher paid off in Westminster's rejection of a Monopolies Commission inquiry.

And, having laid the groundwork for a national TV network in his home base, Murdoch spent much of last year readying his empire for more international adventures: once again, the supporting double-act was Hambros and Morgan Grenfell.

A major tactical weakness in the old Murdoch set-up — it might have prevented his fast-moving *Times* bid — was that News International, of Britain, his most cash-rich company, still had 50.1 per cent outside shareholders. He could not therefore have free access to International's cash-flow or assets. And these are substantial: in June last year News International had about £10 million of cash and a further £17 million of readily saleable stock exchange investments, in addition to annual cash flow about five times as high a capital spending.

In summer 1980, the outside shareholders received details of a complex scheme worked out by Morgan Grenfell, which offered them in exchange for their International shares what amount to non-voting preference shares in News Corporation, the Australian centre-piece of the group. The package was larded with some useful capital gains, and recommended to the shareholders by a distinguished merchant bank — Hambros.

Few shareholders, probably, realised how closely-linked Hambros are to the Murdoch operation. (Even an outside director we spoke to last week didn't know Hambros had 'warehoused' shares for the Ansett deal.) Although one institution quibbled, the deal went through, and transformed Murdoch's financial position: by the end of 1980, he was set-up to tackle almost any target.

His one orthodox Fleet Street rival for Times Newspapers, the Associated Newspapers group, could not conceivably have put up the financial guarantees that Murdoch's News International has been able to give about the maintenance of *The Times*. Lonrho were simply too slow off the mark, even if they had equivalent resources.

Murdoch might have been vulnerable to a determined campaign attacking his credibility as a proprietor of the *Sunday Times* — attacking, indeed, the idea that the Times group's biggest newspaper needed precipitate rescue. Few people have shown better than Murdoch himself how to combine a rough, tough merchant-banking attack with journalistic searchlight focused on the opponent.

But the *Sunday Times* editorial consortium, which planned to buy out the paper themselves — and had guarantees of finance — kept a low profile throughout. And they went, for their merchant-banking advice, as luck would have it, to the very Morgan Grenfell executive, Mr Richmond-Watson, who handles the News Group business.

Neither Richmond-Watson, nor the *Sunday Times* people, knew when they got together in December, that Rupert Murdoch was going to be in the field. There was, it should be stressed, no impropriety on Mr Watson's part, and he informed Murdoch, when the competitive situation became apparent, that Morgan Grenfell could not act for him. But by that stage Murdoch didn't need Morgan Grenfell, or anybody else.

Insofar as the news meant anything, it signified that Murdoch would not face any brutal opposition from the *Sunday Times* consortium: for with the best will in the world, Morgan Grenfell could not mount a rugged anti-Murdoch campaign in anybody's cause. There's an old lawyer's maxim which says that a lawyer who acts for himself has a fool for a client: perhaps this translates into saying that the journalists who work for a paper are often the last to find out what is really happening to it. □

*Holmes a'Court, of the Perth-based Bell group, was also a *Times* bidder.

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TRADE UNIONS

Prior's greenish-blue paper

Jeremy McMullen

THE GOVERNMENT's Green Paper on Trade Union Immunities published this month is put forward to provide 'a wide and informed debate on the law concerning industrial action and on the role in modern life of trade unions and employers and their duties and obligations.' In fact it is highly prescriptive in tone, in many places gravely distorts the unions' arguments and canvasses extreme and moderate methods, leaving Prior to tread his softly-softly path.

Trade unionism exists in Britain because the full application of the common law has been blocked at certain crucial stages of our history — the 1870s, 1906 and 1974 — by providing immunity for otherwise illegal acts. The Green Paper admits that 'to the extent to which these immunities are reduced, the common law liabilities are immediately restored' and looks at eight areas in which trade union rights are thus removed.

Not content with watching how the unions fare in the pincer movement of progressive unemployment and the 1980 Employment Act, further checks on the right to take industrial action are envisaged. Disputes about demarcation or non-union membership could be excluded from lawful action, as could any dispute with a political element. Since seven million workers are in some form of public employment, and therefore likely to be in dispute ultimately with the government, such a measure would be quite oppressive.

The 1980 bans on most forms of 'secondary action' — sympathetic strikes and blacking — are the foundation stone for more restrictions. The government is seeking to outlaw all traditional forms of union solidarity at a time when employers and corporations have never been stronger or better co-ordinated. Naturally, picketing gets a further battering with proposals that employers could require the police to obtain pickets' names and addresses. And injunctions could be granted to create 'no-go' areas for pickets, defined by employers and enforced by the police.

The closed shop is again pilloried, with the Government recording its hatred of this form of union organisation. It wants to outlaw all closed shop agreements, and to ban all forms of action against non-union labour and non-union made products. Ballots are confirmed as the only acceptable way of conducting trade union affairs, and closed shops which survive should regularly be passed through this sieve. It is here that the government's position is most strident but it fails to project the unions' principles against further restriction.

For example, unions object to being ordered to conduct all their business by ballots because this involves interference in free and democratic workers' organisations not only by the state but also, in Britain, by the press. Unions demand closed shops because these represent the highest level of union organisation, and members object to people gaining from this while refusing to contribute to, or accept the responsibilities of, union membership. The government assumes that union officers must be elected, yet this is only one aspect of the long-standing argument within the union movement about the best way to make officials *accountable*. Secret ballots are the government's favourite principle, yet nothing is said of the value in decision making of debates at union meetings, or discussion at various levels by elected representatives. These are not simply questions of balance. Throughout the Green Paper, the union viewpoint is represented only by *practical* objections: who should ballot, when can a strike be called, how do you distinguish 'secondary pickets', how do you enforce procedure agreements?

As well as checking union action, the government also wants to reform collective bargaining. In particular it bemoans the slippage of authority from full-time officers to shop stewards and lay members.

> A shift of power has been taking place in the trade union movement; from the centre to the shop floor, from full-time officials of the unions to shop stewards . . . It is reflected in the tendency for plenary power to call industrial action, negotiate and settle to be seized by the shop floor or delegated to it.

What's wrong with that, especially for a government so committed to balloting? The inconsistency of its position, not least after two state-owned industries, BL Cars and BSC, bypassed official negotiating procedures and conducted ballots of shop floor workers, reveals the highly partisan nature of its approach. To dress this document up as a factual basis for debate is stretching credulity to extremes. □

SIR HAROLD WILSON

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Living in a state of siege

FRANCIS WHEEN reports on police harassment in London

'THE DETECTION of crime,' Roy Hattersley said the week before last, 'is enormously influenced by the relationship that is created between the police and the community.' A report* which is published this week shows how dangerously strained that 'relationship' is becoming. It also suggests that in some neighbourhoods the greater police powers recommended by the Royal Commission on Criminal Procedure are already part of everyday life.

The report is the result of nearly two years' hard toil by a working party which was created by Lambeth council, in south London, 'to inquire into the nature of policing in Lambeth in recent years and its effect on the local community'. The authors include a QC, a Tory councillor, two Labour councillors and the Dean of Lambeth. They and their colleagues received 275 submissions — more than 1,500 pages of evidence — from organisations and individuals in Lambeth. Commander Adams, the head of the local police, refused to have anything to do with the inquiry, and one can see why: the report presents a battery of evidence which suggests that many police in Lambeth are wilful initiators of trouble and ill-feeling. Their aim often seems to be to keep part of the local population in a state of siege.

In recent years, every time there has been a complaint about police misbehaviour, a chief constable or Home Secretary has been ready to go on television and explain that such complaints are part of an organised 'anti-police' conspiracy. No matter that the reaction has about as much sense as one which would describe as 'anti-football' any soccer spectator who objected to persistent fouling. Hitherto it has sufficed: the police have relied on the 'goodwill' felt for them by the 'silent majority'. However, the era when such dismissals of all criticism were acceptable is now ending, because the supposed 'goodwill' is running out. The point is well put by one of the people who gave evidence to the Lambeth working party:

> I am not naive. I am aware of the extent of juvenile crime and the problems the police face in combatting this. But I also know the black parents and youngsters who *themselves* condemn the real criminals and yet who now would be very reluctant to report all but the most serious problems to the police.

As this quote suggests, Lambeth has a fairly large black population, and the strains in the relationship between local police and the community are exacerbated by the way in which the police indulge in systematic intimidation of the black residents. Here, for example, are the words of one black mother:

> Every time they go off my heart is in my mouth. My son when he was fourteen, he went to meet his girlfriend at the bus stop. He jumped off the bus and immediately was arrested. Our experience is that deep down there is a fear. You expect to rely on the police, but when you can't trust them the whole basis of our community is at risk.

Like her, most of the witnesses quoted in the report do not sound as though they are 'anti-police' by inclination; they are simply people

Tessa Howland (IFL)

who have been cowed into a mood of brooding resentment. Here is a black bus driver:

> I know for a fact that if there wasn't a police most of us wouldn't be alive today. I know that for sure because we must have a police, because there must be law and order somewhere. But when they have to approach you in a high-style manner for no reason at all, I mean they don't approach you like they're a peace officer, they're more like war officers. And I mean they could be civil to people. But they're not.

'Uncivil' is something of an understatement for much police behaviour in Lambeth. Silas Allen, a 44-year-old man born in Jamaica, was awarded damages last year for the excessive force used by the police who arrested him for a minor driving offence. Mr Justice May said in the High Court:

> They (the police officers) caught hold of him in an arm lock and propelled him to the police car and tried to push him into the back. They must have hurt him and he said so. . . His wife shouted at the officers to let her husband go and was told to go away or she too would be arrested. That was not a helpful comment. At that point Mr Allen said: 'You're hurting me, why are you doing this?' The reply he received was: 'Because I don't like you.'

Mr Allen was an exception only in that he was prepared to sue for damages. As the Lambeth report shows, most people who have been ill-treated by the police do not make an official complaint, for fear that such a step will simply invite further harassment.

A LEADING AIM of policing in Lambeth — and in other areas with large black communities — appears to be to lay siege to the black population. A black clergyman in Lambeth reports that he once asked the local police what advice they expected him and other 'community leaders' to give to black youths. 'Get them off the streets' was the reply. Other black witnesses also claim to have been told by the police that if they wish not to get 'nicked' they should stay indoors. If black people still persist in their desire to walk the Queen's highway as freely as any other citizen of this country, the police will instruct them more forcibly by stopping them, searching them, asking them where they are going, picking them up for 'sus'. ('Sus' is to be abolished, but it seems likely that the new offence of 'interfering with a motor vehicle' will be used in the same way.) Here are some examples from the report:

> There is Mrs B., whose son was going to school earlier this year, she was confined to bed with high blood pressure so she had given him the money to buy a blazer. The shop wasn't open so he walked around waiting for it to open. Coming out of British Home Stores he was jumped on from behind by two white men who caught him round the neck and by his arm. He was taken to Brixton police station. He was 13 years old at the time, and quite small. This was at 9.30 in the morning; the parents weren't contacted until 7 in the evening.

> . . . In October 1979 I sent my son, 15, out to get fish and chips. He was stopped in the street by two men, plain-clothes, who searched him and asked him where he got his money.

> . . . Two West Indian boys were standing at a bus stop on their own by Lloyd's bank in Clapham. One boy looked a bit rough but reasonable. The other man was well dressed. They were grabbed by two policemen, pushed against the fence and searched. Nothing was said. There was no bus there, they were just standing on their own.

A youth club worker reported that the main club evening, Thursday, normally attracted about 100 members. During November 1978, when the Special Patrol Group was in Brixton, attendance was reduced to a handful, so scared were black youngsters of going out.

HARASSMENT of this type is only half the story. The other reason for bad relations between the black population and the police force is that the police, who are so zealous when it comes to intimidating black people, are remarkably slothful when they are asked to investigate wrongs done to those same people. Even when black people have been attacked and have been able to identify their assailants, a common police reaction is simply to suggest that the victim should take out a private summons against the offender. An Asian couple who owned a grocery shop became so frustrated by police indifference to a number of racist attacks on the shop that they moved out.

This may, indeed, be the police's intention. One witness said:

> This (racist attacks) has been going on this last three or four years and there's no point ringing them. Nothing happens. I was very sad when one policeman told me: 'Perhaps they don't want you. Perhaps they don't want somebody black in this house.' I thought myself that a police officer shouldn't say things like that. 'You better go away, they don't want you.'

Black people will not go away. And their demands are not large: all they ask is to be allowed to live free of fear and harassment. As long as the police refuse to accept this, black people will become more and more alienated and bitter. As a black old age pensioner says:

> But I must tell you something. It's a very dangerous situation in Brixton with the police. The way they talk to you on the street and they want to beat you up and all that, pushing you about for nothing. And I must tell you the truth too, if it was not for my age I would kill that man on the street, but I'm too old, I been ill a long time. If I was about ten years younger I kill him right.

Bravado, perhaps. But the riot in Bristol last year showed that this type of frustration can express itself with considerable violence. Is this *really* what the police want? □

*Available for £4.50 (inc. p&p) from Lambeth Town Hall, Brixton Hill, London SW2.

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ISLAMIC SUMMIT

'Be loyal to God alone'

CLAUDIA WRIGHT reports from Saudi Arabia

FOR THOSE brought up on tales of the Arab revolt, desert derring-do, and the betrayal of Sykes-Picot 65 years ago, it is reassuring on a return to Saudi Arabia to find that although the old Jeddah is unrecognisable in the new and much of Taif's Hijazi architecture has been demolished, T.E. Lawrence's handiwork is not.

The cabins of the Turkish trains lie where he struck them, the undercarriages twisted by the gelignite charges but unrusted in the dryness; the interiors looted but the woodwork preserved like a pharaonic sarcophagus. In its panoply of modern arms, the procession of Islamic heads of state that took place on Sunday from Taif to Mecca was almost a match for the march of Lawrence's camel corps out of Wadi Rumm on the road to Damascus.

As Lawrence himself noted at the opening of *The Seven Pillars,* this is a country of utopian beginnings, false hopes and sharp betrayals. Just so the prospects of the Islamic summit may prove to be, despite Saudi optimism.

The Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) is jumpy, with reason. By my count no less than one quarter of the members experienced a coup d'etat or attempted coup in the past 12 months; more than a third are engaged in some form of counter-insurgency against internal dissidents; one in six has despatched military forces for action beyond its borders; and just under half of the members have engaged foreign military advisers, troops and installations to help keep the neighbours out.

As political ideology, then, the Islamic revival for some of the members of the OIC is an effort to replenish the fund of national political legitimacy that has been bankrupted by profligate spending by the political factions of the past. This understood, it is nonetheless ludicrous to follow what the representatives of General Evren of Turkey, General Zia ul-Haq of Pakistan and General Suharto of Indonesia have had to say on one of the significant items on the political agenda — human rights in Islam. No amount of cleansing in the anteroom of the great mosque could remove the blood from their hands. Even if, as the Koran admirably prescribes, it is to be the Blast of Fire, the Boiling Water, and the Black Smoke for these gents in the world to come, their victims in the present world can hardly look to this summit meeting for salvation.

BUT THIS conference has been first and foremost a Saudi affair, and the main business was both a reflection of Riyadh's priorities and a measure of the effectiveness with which the brothers of Abdulaziz and sons of Faisal get their way.

Americans here and in Washington — and not a few of Lord Carrington's pinstripers as well — are confident that they have the measure of the Saudis and can predict which way they will jump. Khaled's remarks on 'Islam (as) the religion of moderation and equilibrium', on 'the burden of oppression' in Afghanistan and on the 'bankruptcy of imported ideologies' were immediately telegraphed back to Washington with the thumbs-up sign.

tory' has already been turned by the Saudis.

Saud chose Turkey — 'the only aligned country at the conference', he emphasised — to make a broader point about which side his government will be on in the future. Referring to Turkish colonialism of the region as 'a long period of particular and especial responsibility to the Islamic world', he hoped that Turkish compliance with the summit resolutions on Israel 'will emanate from this awareness of their responsibility to the Islamic world'.

With uncharacteristic bluntness he then attacked Turkish refusal to end diplomatic, commercial and trade relations with Israel — as ordered by the summit: 'The step they have taken to show their objection to Israel's activities is — is a positive step in downgrading their (diplomatic) representation there. But we think that in order to bring the action to meet with the effect, that requires that Turkey takes a much firmer stand.'

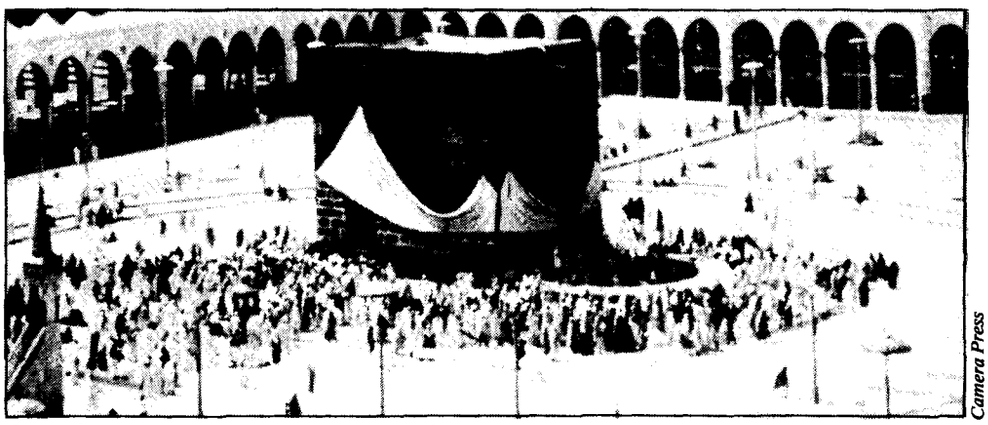
It has been confirmed that Saud's warning is being reinforced by an equally demonstrative wielding of the Saudi oil and investment weapons. The Turks will not be the last to feel the impact of the new Saudi assertiveness.

JUST HOW FAR the Saudis can be taken for granted by the Americans and the West cannot be judged by textual analysis of the summit's public rhetoric, or even of the secret dossiers of draft resolutions put together for the foreign ministers' conference and, after their debate and approval, for consideration by the chiefs of state. Anything that is put down on paper in this part of the world represents a compromise (at least one, usually several) that is not half as revealing as the talk that preceded it.

For example, the arrangements being negoworld — not even his wife — trusts Zia ul-Haq to keep his promises, the sort of pact that was reported in London would never be sealed by an official here.

What has been debated in Taif is whether the tiated by Saudi Arabia with the Gulf sheikhdoms — Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, UAE and Oman — to implement a collective security plan, with the assistance of Pakistani troops, are not on any agenda, but there has been considerable manoeuvring by the sheiks, as well as Iraq, Jordan and Pakistan, on the nature of the commitments on offer for each other's political survival and personal longevity.

A London *Sunday Times* report (18 January) suggesting that the Saudis had offered General Zia $800 million to push ahead with his H-bomb project — on condition he excluded the Iraqis and Libyans from the know-how at the end — was wrong on so many details that officials here termed it a 'plant'. Saudi aid is already flowing to Pakistan at higher dollar levels, and the Pakistanis will proceed with their bomb whoever helps or stands in the way, even if, in Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's well-known words, 'we have to eat grass'. As no one in the Islamic states will *publicly* commit themselves to achieving what in private it is perfectly obvious several member states are already determined to do — reach nuclear strategic balance with the Israelis.



Camera Press

Mecca, home of Islam and possible fulcrum of global power

The commitments the summit has made to invigorating the economic boycott of Israel and toughening the terms on which the PLO and the Arabs are prepared to negotiate on the Palestinian issue ought not to be news to anyone except Americans who can't accept the Camp David failure, or who imagine that at some desperate last moment the Saudis and Jordanians will leap into their pockets.

What the Saudi leadership has done in a masterly fashion is to use the summit resolutions to reinforce what has been there all along, since Abdulaziz and Faisal — the determination at the opportune time to cut a foreign policy of their own, in which they are the fulcrum of regional, indeed global power, as Mecca is the centre of Islam. □

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A taste of Dr Owen's medicine

David Owen's book, *Face the Future* *, is likely to become a central text in the discussions about the future of the Left in Britain. Owen both redefines his own socialism, and sets out the prospectus that is likely to guide any breakaway grouping. As this week's Limehouse Declaration showed, the breakaway grouping has as yet failed to develop a coherent and distinctive set of policies. How good is David Owen's analysis? Do his prescriptions require a new political alignment — or can the issues continue to be debated inside the Labour Party? We asked socialists and special experts to look at different themes explored in *Face the Future* and to assess Owen's case.

* Published this week by Jonathan Cape, £12.50

PETER TOWNSEND

Missing the depth of inequality

OWEN REVEALS an insufficient grasp of the nature and extent of inequality and poverty and therefore of the need to transform capitalist society to deal with these ugly, and degrading phenomena. The fault lies in his interpretation of the situation at both ends of the social scale and in his indifference to the connections between class and economic and social institutions.

He hedges repeatedly about fact, as well as argument and policy. The facts about the distribution of wealth and income 'are difficult to agree upon' (p.77) yet, without giving any impression of having studied carefully the more reliable sources of information, he concludes that inequality has been reduced (p.78).

He does not begin to examine whether or not trends in the distribution of wealth and employer fringe benefits, in combination with trends in incomes from employment and social security, are widening inequalities in living standards. He does not seem to think that the inheritance of wealth is particularly significant nor appear to see the rich as holding much power. Breathtakingly he writes, 'wealth-holders are rarely crucial decision-makers or as great an influence as tax payers with a middle range of incomes' (p.76).

The discussion of poverty is nearly as bad. He appreciates neither its nature nor its growing extent in the 1980s. It isn't just that he fails to convey the human impact, including unnecessary suffering and early death, of deprivation at work, and in the home, the environment and the community. He fails to recognise that people's needs are created, and therefore poverty manufactured, by the society to which people belong — by its laws and conventions, market institutions and distribution of employment, housing and social amenities. Changes in the institutional structure or in social conventions and not only in the level of income can increase or reduce the number in poverty.

Owen writes feelingly not so much about the human effects of poverty as when it begins to threaten political stability. The 'poverty trap' becomes 'alarming' when it 'triggers inflationary wage pressures' (p.79). He shrinks repeatedly from strategies to establish rights to income on a generous scale. Thus, while low pay is 'a major cause' of poverty (p.87) minimum wages legislation would be 'very expensive' and 'could also be self-defeating through its effect on inflation and unemployment' (p.88).

The same is true of the case for higher pensions and other benefits as of right. He tends not to dwell on the indignity, unfairness and low standards of means-testing so much as on the huge cost of paying universal benefits to make means-testing unnecessary. He resorts, as his principal contribution to an anti-poverty strategy, to the introduction of negative income tax, or what he calls 'reverse income tax'.

He does not seem to realise that negative income tax, like 'positive' income tax, can be Right-wing or Left-wing in construction and that in its administrative implementation is all too likely to resemble the traditional administration of the means test. We are unlikely to expunge 200 years of bureaucratic and social discrimination in the administration of poor relief simply by passing the job to, of all institutions, the Board of Inland Revenue.

Owen might care to remember that an early form of negative income tax was put forward by Milton Friedman, with the enthusiastic support of the then Republican candidate for the Presidency, Senator Goldwater — because it would lead to a massive reduction in public expenditure. Socialists should beware of the magic wand syndrome of modern politics — of badly defined technical or administrative measures which are supposed to solve the problems of the poor without hurting the rich. On this showing David Owen's book is not for Socialists at all, and should have been entitled 'More of the Same'.

Peter Townsend is Professor of Sociology at Essex University.

PAUL ORMEROD

A radical economic strategy

OWEN'S STATEMENT on economic policy is undoubtedly the most coherent to emerge from the Labour Right in recent years. Unlike many of his colleagues on the Right, Owen is prepared to set out the policies he thinks should be carried out instead of simply indulging in a hand-wringing defence of the most reactionary acts of the Callaghan Government and the constitutional status quo. Judging by the contents of this chapter, David Owen realises that Labour cannot repeat the deeply conservative, monetarist policies of 1974-79.

The most striking feature of the chapter is his strong defence of public expenditure. In complete contrast to Roy Jenkins and Milton Friedman, Owen does not perpetrate the myth that public expenditure is 60 per cent of Britain's national output, and that democracy is thereby threatened. Indeed he takes time and trouble to expose the myth, and has clearly absorbed a good deal of the Left's arguments in recent years on public expenditure.

Owen also argues cogently for increased intervention in the economy. He is not willing to accept the complete Cambridge Economic Policy Group argument for protective measures against all manufactured imports. But he treats the argument fairly and does not dismiss it out of hand. One of his main points is shared by many on the Left: the Cambridge Group assume that inflation will not be increased by import-competing industries raising their prices — but this assumption is unlikely to hold true behind the 70 per cent tariff barriers of last year's *CEPG Review*. Owen, however, is clearly in favour of selective import controls. He argues forcefully that these will have a beneficial effect upon output and employment in this country, provided that the controls are negotiated bilaterally. However, he probably underestimates the strength of Britain's position in such negotiations, and handicaps himself substantially by his support for the EEC.

He is in favour of establishing a special Oil Fund, to use the revenues from the North Sea to preserve directly our industrial base. Like the TUC, Owen argues for investment in key sectors of industry that have been identified as core industries. He wants more control of banks, to make them finance investment in productive industry on reasonable terms. Public spending with a high employment content should be directed to special areas and there should be tax cuts aimed specifically to help the low paid.

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Taken together these policies are more progressive than any which have been carried out in practice in Britain in the last thirty years. A major weakness of Owen's discussion is its lack of appreciation of the power of capital to move against a Labour government prepared to carry out even the policies which Owen advocates. The need for exchange controls and, in this context, intervention in industry is not discussed, although Owen does recognise that the 'volatility' of the money markets has been a major problem for Labour governments.

It is difficult to understand why Owen feels the temptation to leave the Labour Party: his views on economic policies are anathema to many of his potential colleagues in a Centre Party. His arguments are genuinely in the spirit of Crosland. The majority of the Labour Party are currently in favour of even more radical policies, but objectively, there is no unbridgeable gap between the two sets of views of the sort which would make dialogue impossible.

Paul Ormerod leads the economic forecasting team at the Economist Intelligence Unit.

HILARY WAINWRIGHT

The wrong tradition

THE MOST startling thing about Owen's book is its claim to continue the libertarian socialist tradition of William Morris and G. D. H. Cole. For his detailed prescriptions for industry are in fact markedly different from those of the founding fathers. Morris and Cole were arguing for a transformation of power: Owen is concerned with a transformation of attitudes.

In Owen's view it is uncooperative attitudes on both sides of industry which are to blame for Britain's industrial decline: 'the central focus (in explaining this decline) must be the failure of managers and workers to trust each other and to co-operate effectively together'. This change of attitudes, according to Owen, will be brought about by involving workers in management's policy decisions. Through these discussions workers will come face to face with commercial realities and realise the folly of their intransigent attitudes.

This makes several false assumptions both about commercial realities and about workers' attitudes. First it assumes the market is a democratic force to whose imperatives workers should be obliged to respond. This may be consistent with the consumer sovereignty implied by the theoretical models of perfect competition but in the real world of the multinational corporation the market is shaped by enough manipulation, connivance and undemocratic exercise of power to fully justify the resistance of workers who believed that there are alternatives to its constraints. Secondly Owen assumes that once workers understand 'commercial reality' they will react in only one way. Yet where workers have made inquiries into their companies' commercial decisions they have started with very different objectives and often reached very different conclusions from their management. Crucially, recent workers' inquiries were based on the idea of social efficiency, matching productive resources with social needs, rather than with private efficiency — the requirements of a particular industry. In this way they illustrate something Owen seems to deny: that workers do not normally see themselves just as workers for a particular company but as consumers and part of a wider community. The example of the Lucas Aerospace stewards is best known. The stewards drew up a 400 page criticism of management's plans, showing them to be due not to lack of demand — as management had presented them — but the result of global company restructuring connected with marketing arrangements made with other European companies (so much for Owen's competitive democratic market).

Owen also places much store on co-operatives, pointing to the success of Mondragon. Mondragon is indeed a good illustration of how new social relations can be created in an area which has considerable political autonomy. But Owen fails to point out that Mondragon had 20 years of world boom in which to gradually accumulate funds. Nor does he address himself to the problems of unsympathetic political institutions. Though he advocates the expansion of the co-operative sector he suggests nothing radical enough to ensure the survival, prosperity and radical growth of co-operatives.

In the end, as if unconvinced by the role of co-operatives, he returns to traditional policies of state intervention and planning even citing the most centrist of planning nations — France. Ultimately he advocates something very close to the policies the last Labour government would have tried to carry out if these policies had not become associated with the Left by the CBI. It is little wonder that Sir Leslie Murphy, the former head of the National Enterprise Board, the spearhead of Labour corporatism, has become one of the first Councillors for Social Democracy. A highly critical inquiry into the NEB's form of State Intervention was undertaken by four Trades Councils last year. The method of the inquiry comes itself nearest to being the modern equivalent of the workers' control which Owen advocates as his own. In other words, contrary to what Owen seems to believe, there is a libertarian socialist tradition — inside and outside the Labour Party — which challenges rather than sustains the corporate state.

Hilary Wainwright contributed to the joint Trades Council Enquiry into State Intervention in Industry.

PATRICIA HEWITT

Dr Owen's liberal friends

DAVID OWEN supports a Freedom of Information Act, privacy legislation, greater police accountability and freedom to demonstrate. But he is so concerned with proving that 'the Left' are no longer libertarian that he barely admits, let alone explains, the failures of the last Labour government.

It was Cabinet members — not the Labour Party or leftwing backbenchers — who authorised the ABC prosecution, refused an open government law, allowed the Home Office to delay on privacy and failed to repeal 'sus'. It was Roy Jenkins and Sam Silkin who secretly authorised jury-vetting — more extensively even than Sir Michael Havers. He praises the radical nature of the 1966-70 PLP, but ignores the disgraceful 1968 Commonwealth Immigrant Act (introduced by Callaghan, opposed by Foot).

Despite a full account of the problems of police accountability and proposals that, for instance, a police authority should be able to refuse the local establishment of a Special Patrol Group, Owen's analysis of policing

issues is superficial. He refers to the 'complex problems of crime, alienation and public disorder which infect our society' — but then goes on to ask that we choose between 'freedom' and 'freedom from crime'.

Owen is quite right to say that socialists must take policing policy seriously and find acceptable as well as more effective ways of reducing street violence: but surely it is a caricature to suggest that Labour is becoming the 'anti-Police Party'. More to the point, Sir Robert Mark, followed by other sections of the police, have specifically described the police as a 'force against socialism.'

Owen finds it hard to take criticisms of the police seriously (perhaps because they share with doctors a place at the top of public opinion polls?). He approves of police visits to the West Indies but fails, in this context, to mention the use of 'sus' in the Met or their failure to protect racial minorities from racist violence. He hopes that the police will not resist an extension of the role of police authorities — but ignores the accumulating evidence that the police are utterly opposed to what they call 'political interference' and Owen calls democracy.

Nor does Owen examine Britain's immigration laws either for their effect on police-community relations or their general impact on human rights. It was the last Labour government which extended the meaning of the 1971 Immigration Act to allow the arbitrary arrest, detention without charge and deportation without trial of suspected 'illegal entrants', many of whom had been settled in this country, apparently lawfully, for years. Arbitrary executive power is anathema to the principles Owen claims to respect: but neither the workings of the 1971 Act nor the system of internal exile created by the Prevention of Terrorism Act (another monument to Roy Jenkins) rates any criticism.

The defence of civil liberties is not and should never be the preserve of any part of the political spectrum. Owen does not make out his case that 'the Left' and 'the Labour Party' (it is not always clear who he means) have shrunk from championing civil liberties. On the right to demonstrate, many sections of the Left have fallen into the trap of supporting bans as a way of achieving political results; but opposition to jury-vetting, discriminatory immigration laws, the Prevention of Terrorism Act and the use of the Official Secrets Act has come wholeheartedly from many Tribunite MPs. There is no evidence in this book that a government led

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by the Council for Social Democracy would do any better than the last Labour government in protecting human rights. Complacency does not make good civil libertarians.

Patricia Hewitt is general secretary of the National Council for Civil Liberties.

FRANK FIELD

A strange silence on party democracy

OWEN LEAVES us in no doubt about what is the most important issue he touches upon. When discussing the move towards making MPs mandated party delegates he writes: 'There is no more fundamental issue in British politics'. But readers who expect a full discussion of the constitutional issues which dominate the Labour Party are in for a big disappointment. Although the issues are supposedly the social democrats' sticking point, they receive bizarrely marginal treatment.

There is no proper analysis of the forces behind and the arguments of the constitutional debate. In my view the Right in the Labour Party have suffered defeats in the Party since 1979 for two reasons. First, there is widespread disappointment among Labour activists with Labour's performance in government, when the right were in control. Their judgment may be unfair and unjust but it is a political fact of life nonetheless.

Second, the Right have failed to come up with an alternative set of proposals to the Left's alternative strategy, with the honourable exception of Nicholas Bosanquet's recent contribution (*Signposts for the Eighties,* Campaign for Labour Victory).

Many party activists have gone along with the constitutional reforms — because they promised a well controlled PLP, with the hope of offering a better performance next time — before the issues themselves were fully debated and understood. The three constitutional reforms — mandatory reselection, electing the leader and control of the manifesto — offer both opportunities as well as threats to democratic socialism. The libertarian left must play a full part in strengthening the democratic elements in the Party. They have played no effective role so far.

On mandatory reselection Owen now talks of sacked MPs having the right of a final court of appeal composed of all party members. But surely if the reselection meeting is open to all party members it provides this. Owen reminds us, as did Burke, that MPs exercising their judgment have a crucial role to play in safeguarding and developing a free society. Surely the way to strengthen this side of their work is to make them accountable to the membership as a whole and not just a small and constantly changing GMC.

Owen has almost no discussion on how to draw up the manifesto, yet for the increased role of the Party Conference in deciding the election manifesto to work, there needs to be a revolution in the way party policy is made. His brief discussion on the selection of the leader illustrates all the weaknesses of those opposing the electoral college. Immediately after the last conference I began discussing with local party members the idea of one person, one vote as the means for electing a Labour leader. I thought it more democratic than the other alternatives on offer, but I was aware of its drawbacks. It must not be used as a way of weakening the links with the unions and in its crude form it does not reflect the tripartite basis of the Labour Movement. With only a couple of lines devoted to this idea in *Face the Future* it's not surprising that a serious alternative to last Saturday's decision has yet to get off the ground.

Frank Field is Labour MP for Birkenhead.

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ROBIN COOK

Procrastinate and survive?

IT WOULD BE unfair to caricature David Owen's chapter on Negotiate and Survive as yet another statement from the right explaining why Britain's defence posture cannot be altered until we have first persuaded the rest of the world to change their defence posture. It contains flashes of radicalism that must have caused mild palpitations at the Labour Committee for Transatlantic Understanding, a wholly owned subsidiary of NATO, who previously published this chapter as a pamphlet.

Owen believes the new drive to identify a Euro-strategic Balance to be dangerous and destabilising, although curiously he supports the NATO decision to deploy Cruise Missiles which is mainly justified as an attempt to obtain such a balance. He denounces the efforts that have been made to fudge the distinction between nuclear weapons and high explosives (he must have been thinking of Bill Rodgers who has discussed them in the *NS* as alternative options), and rejects any talk of a limited nuclear war. Finally, he is opposed to defence policy being shrouded in excessive secrecy, although he does nothing in this chapter to dispel any of the thick fog that enveloped discussion of nuclear weapon policy by the last Labour Government.

It also would be ungenerous not to admit that the chapter provides a comprehensive review of the recent history of disarmament talks and the new reader looking for a brief survey of the field could do worse than start here. Yet there's the rub. The general effect of the extensive parade of disarmament negotiations that have run into the sand and arms control forums that are locked in stalemate, is to destroy his central thesis that we should trust to such things for our salvation.

Consider the number of such negotiations which are currently at an impasse. The Vienna talks on force reductions have been proceeding for nearly a decade on a formal basis (a dozen years if you count in the period of exploratory talks) and have yet to produce agreement on the number of soldiers at present in Europe, let alone how many there should be. The Geneva talks on a test ban looked good in early 1978, but have since suffered a relapse and have spent the last three years endlessly debating inspection. The Non-Proliferation Treaty has failed to attract the signatures of precisely those countries most likely to acquire nuclear weapons (Israel, South Africa, Pakistan, India, Brazil).

Consider too the meagre results of those negotiations which have been successfully concluded. The Biological Weapons Convention is the one achievement of any substance. Otherwise we have such purely cosmetic agreements as the Treaty on the Sea Bed, which prevents the parties to it from fixing nuclear weapons to the sea bed although their missile submarines may continue to roam the oceans, and has been likened to a treaty prohibiting the signatories from bolting their bombers to the runway. By way of contrast mass protest has chalked up one recent major success by compelling NATO to abandon deployment of the neutron bomb.

The credibility gap which must be leapt by Owen's claims for the efficacy of negotiation rather than protest is at its widest in relation to the SALT process. After half-a-dozen years of negotiation there emerged a treaty which permits both sides to greatly increase their arsenals, only to be hamstrung by the US Senate which apparently found it too restrictive. Extraordinarily David Owen does not offer any view as to whether the Senate should ratify SALT II or what we do with his precious negotiations if they don't. Instead he neatly sidesteps the whole question and happily frolics over a number of pages constructing yet more disarmament forums through which Europe might contribute to SALT III.

One can sympathise with the psychological block. Inherent in his assertion that negotiation is the only way to end the arms race is the assumption that only external forces contribute to it. He therefore has to deny any analysis that suggests that the mainspring of the arms race is rooted within our respective societies and must ignore the evidence of the power of the arms lobby, demonstrated by the collapse of SALT II. His concept of negotiation does not extend to negotiation with the scientists who dream up new weapons, the businessmen who profit from them, and the military leaders who derive prestige from them.

Yet if the arms race has domestic roots the neat antithesis between negotiation and unilateral action is a false dichotomy. David Owen's passionate defence of the pursuit of negotiated settlements is distinctly quixotic, as I do not know anyone in the peace movement who is opposed to negotiations. But international negotiations cannot relieve us of the need to take unilateral decisions. Hitherto disarmament negotiations have been constantly undermined by unilateral decisions to escalate the arms race, just as the negotiations on chemical warfare are about to be torpedoed by US resumption of mass production of nerve gas.

Meantime, the arms race drags us near the cliff. Recently, the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists reset the hands on the clock in their masthead at four minutes to midnight, nearer even than in the Cuban missile crisis. Owen's style does not match the urgency of the situation.

Robin Cook is MP for Edinburgh Central.

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TONY TRAVERS

Decentralising the State

DAVID OWEN'S contribution to the debate on local government could barely have been more timely. As the book is published, the main feature of the 1980 Local Government Act — the block grant — is collapsing around the Government's ears. In fact, Owen's ideas are not so much new as a reassertion of others put forward in the past by people favouring increased local control and a weakening of central bureaucracy. Owen sees local government as a vital element in his ideal of constructing a participatory democracy. Few central government politicians share his views.

His proposals for increasing local decision-making include more neighbourhood councils, new and buoyant income sources (including local income tax), a reduction in the proportion of councils' income met by grants, simpler grants and (within the Labour Party) more involvement of councillors in the running of the Party. Legislation which infringes local autonomy should be introduced only rarely.

This last point, just as much as financial reform, is at the heart of the difficulty faced by all governments in Britain: what to do about councils which will not conform with central government policy. Tory administrations face Labour councils which will not sell council houses, Labour governments repeatedly fail to get rid of grammar schools. Both parties in government legislate for conformity. Both, by any standards, reduce local autonomy. Owen's solution to this central difficulty is unsatisfactory. Using Anthony Crosland's attempts to persuade local authorities to introduce comprehensive education, he states: 'Legislation was rightly only introduced later when a few recalcitrant authorities were resisting a social reform that had been voluntarily accepted by the great majority of local authorities'. This principle — if widely used by central government — is a recipe for endless central legislating to check the activities of a few authorities. It cannot provide a safeguard for genuine local government, as several authorities must currently feel about Michael Heseltine's attempts to ensure greater financial conformity.

Other sections, for example the proposal for more neighbourhood councils, are underdeveloped. Powers to be given to this new tier of government are not discussed. If no powers are to be given, such councils could only be worthless exercises in pseudo-participation. If powers are given, which district functions would change, or is this simply a proposal for more government? Elsewhere, Owen proposes to return health to elected (though presumably non-local authority) bodies. But the possibilities of returning services, including health and water supply, to councils, along with arguments for such changes, are omitted.

On the other hand, the local government chapter is honest about the Labour Government's acceptance of block (then unitary) grant as a reasonable alternative to the existing system of grant support. 'The foundation was laid for the 1980 Act by a Whitehall consensus . . . through the periods of responsibility of three Secretaries of State for the Environment, Anthony Crosland, Peter Shore and Michael Heseltine.' It is not clear whether Owen has the grasp to break this consensus.

Tony Travers is author of Ten Billion Pounds, *a study of the reform of local government.* □

Diary

CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

■ Will Lord Soames become the Secretary General of NATO? It looks as if quitting time is approaching for Dr Joseph Luns, the boring Dutch reactionary who has held the post since 1971, and who could always find some 'strategic' reason for defending the Portuguese and the Greek dictatorships. Unimpeachable sources tell me that Lord Soames is a bit browned off having no proper job and spending his days scything the civil service. With creeping neutralism affecting the other countries of north-west Europe, and with Reagan's people still poring over the map to find where Europe actually is, what could be more reassuring than to have the hero of Zimbabwe at the helm? I would remind all sceptics that he holds the Croix de Guerre for his wartime exploits, and thus will even be able to talk to the French.

■ NATO's largest army is in Turkey. NATO's largest army is also in power in Turkey. Since it took over on 12 September last it has restored capital punishment, imprisoned tens of thousands of people and muzzled the press. It has just rounded up the leadership of the major trade union federation as well. What, then, could be more natural than that our government should give it extra military equipment *free of charge*? Christopher Price MP noticed a tiny Treasury minute proposing the gift to Turkey of 20 million rounds of ball carton, 260,000 of 9mm ball ammunition, plus assorted transmitters and receivers, the whole coming to £3,257,000. The cost of transporting these goodies by sea (£100,000) was also to be borne by a generous taxpayer. He also noticed that any gift, 'either of an unusual nature or of a value exceeding £50,000', can be stalled by the objection of one MP. He has objected on the grounds that Turkey has used NATO equipment improperly against the civilian population of Cyprus. Even under this government, MPs have about one third of the share in decision-making.

■ It beats me how anyone can swallow the idea that Rupert Murdoch wants to buy Times Newspapers and 'preserve their essential character'. If he doesn't want to run them, why does he want to buy them? This question must be occurring with particular force to Mr Simon Winchester, the distinguished scribe who, in spite of his distinction, has until recently been Washington correspondent for the *Daily Mail*. He had been negotiating for a while to join the *Sunday Times*, and the contract was almost signed and sealed when the *Mail* shot him up to Toronto to interview Kenneth, the second baron Thomson. At the end of their talk Winchester coyly revealed that he was probably the last journalist to be hired by the group under Thomson management. 'Kid,' said the great man, 'you're mad'.

■ I once paid a call on a house in Egypt where the youngest girl in the family had just undergone a circumcision. I have never forgotten it. Whenever I read about the practice I become so angry that I am momentarily amazed at how modest and temperate most feminists really are (and Anna Coote can testify that I am not always her staunchest ally). The Minority Rights Group have just produced a tremendously good pamphlet (for £1.20 from 36 Craven Street, London WC2) which details the nature and extent of the custom and, more important to my mind, the proposals for combating and abolishing it. I was intrigued to learn that the business is *not*, as I had been taught, related to Islam. Though it occurs in predominantly Muslim countries, it is practised by Copts, Animists, Catholics and Protestants as well as by non-believers. The Eritrean People's Liberation Front have successfully stamped it out in the areas they control. It is probably not dying out in other areas, indeed it is being performed earlier before girls can learn to object. And. . .but get the pamphlet.

■ A friend of mine pointed out during the American elections that, whereas Jimmy Carter was a very mean and nasty guy trying to act like a nice one, Ronald Reagan was basically a sweetiepie trying to act like a tough and mean guy (those were, almost, his exact words). I must say I like a man who has a good time, and I thoroughly enjoyed the Reagan inaugural extravaganza. If you've got it baby, flaunt it, is what I invariably say. I thought it was tactless of the Sicilian business community to be quite so prominent in the festivities, and now I see that Attorney-General William French Smith has been criticised for attending a party given by suspected *capos*. Well, honestly, any British policeman knows that you have to associate with these people if you want to do your job thoroughly. I say hats off to the new informal Administration.

■ I don't know which is the more rebarbative — David Owen claiming to have invented universal suffrage or Eric Heffer claiming that it is too expensive. Saturday at Wembley was a dispiriting few hours for a socialist to spend. I did find some harmless enjoyment in collecting original arguments against 'one person one vote'. The best known, apart from the one about it being costly, is the one which says that the Tory press will influence the outcome. That, of course, is an argument against having elections of any kind at all. My favourite comes from a Labour MP — a leftist — who told some

Roger Woddis

Grassroots grieving

Like a stone that falls from a mountain,
Like a withered branch from a tree,
Like a worm that crawls from an apple,
Like a tide-mark left by the sea,
Like a speck of dust from a whirlwind,
My darlings have split from me.

Like a scale that drops from an eyelid,
Like a scab that falls from a knee,
Like a wrapping ripped from a parcel,
Like a lawyer split from his fee,
Like a vessel torn from its moorings,
My darlings have split from me.

Like a shaving dropped from a workbench,
Like a skid-mark left by a ski,
Like a drunk who reels from a party,
Like a golfer gone from his tee,
Like a cowpat dropped from a heifer,
My darlings have split from me.

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workers in his constituency that it would be cheap and easy to store the names of eligible voters on a computer, thus avoiding double voting or last-minute joining. That would never do, they said. What if the computer were to fall into the hands of the Special Branch? How bloody marvellous — we mustn't know how many members we have in case Ron Hayward blurts out the truth under torture. Whereas what he doesn't know can't hurt him (or doesn't seem to).

■ In the City, as Roy Jenkins has probably found out by now, they have a little game. It involves collecting observations, rather like the first cuckoo, which tend to show that we have turned the corner. For example, a good sign that recession is biting is the return of white roadsweepers to the streets. Then again, there is encouragement in the revival of politeness among taxi-drivers. They will stop, they will very often take you where you want to go, they are more plentiful and they say 'thank you' if you give them a tip (that last bit is slightly fanciful). You don't have to book tables in restaurants now. Servants are easier to come by. You get the drift. In my area of London there is another symbolic development. The number of girls advertising for commercial sex has doubled or trebled. The windows of newsagents are a riot of perversion and euphemism. I don't know whether it is the recession or not, but the number of them advertising cruelty of one sort or another has also gone up a good deal. One specially pathetic one ends a long litany of sado-masochistic inducements with the crayoned challenge — 'Ring the Bayswater Bitch — *if you dare*'.

■ I spent some time earlier this week with Stanley Adams. I had not met him before, but felt indebted to him. It was he who risked his job and his family life to help the EEC prosecute Hoffman - La Roche (his employers) for a blatant rigging of the vitamins market. The case was proved with ease, and HLR were fined. But Stanley Adams has since been persecuted by the Swiss government, and betrayed by the British. He has also been let down by the Common Market Commission, one of whose officials seems to have shopped him to his employers. Now, nothing will bring back Stanley's wife (who committed suicide when he was falsely imprisoned in the bourgeois Eldorado of Switzerland). Nor will anything restore the years he has lost, or the income he has forfeited. But he wants to live in Britain, and to put his industrial experience and his socialist opinions at the disposal of those who monitor the multinationals. He has been a British consul in Colombia, and his Maltese origins should be no bar to residence here. Merlyn Rees of course did nothing for him. But William Whitelaw may be impressed by the number of Tories who believe that Adams is a white man in spite of any 'nationality bill' law. Not to exaggerate, the Common Market has found its Dreyfus, and people will be remembered for the stand they take, or fail to take, on the matter.

This England

£3 book tokens for entries printed. (On postcard, please.)

□Mr Eric Heffer, referring to conference delegates who would seek to have no decision made today, said: 'I am not calling them saboteurs but that is what they are.' — *The Times* (Eleni Meleagrou)

Sounds familiar

Arthur Marshall

AS I GROW ever older and feebler, my admiration for the world's achievers becomes increasingly profound day by day and perhaps this is the moment for saying a truly grateful and public word of thanks to the good Mr Heinz, wherever he may now be, for that very fine and invaluable range of tinned goods (those beans!) that started to brighten one's life in school days. On Sunday nights at Oundle School, when we were supposedly chock-a-block with spiritual food after over four hours of chapel services and religious instruction, the authorities provided the minimal amount in the way of food that you could actually eat and we were left to provide the main *plat* for ourselves and most of us looked no further than Heinz baked beans on toast, a fragrant succulence by no means unknown today at 'Myrtlebank' when the press of literary work makes a hasty midday snackette all that time allows. For those interested in the minutiae of a writer's life, I take the meal in hurried fashion at my desk and on one occasion a small portion of beans flew from my fork (I dare say I was gobbling) and fell down through the keys and into the inner and mysterious lower regions of my Olivetti where they disappeared from sight. For a day or two, I thought that the machine, whose workings I do not understand, might throw up a tomatoey word or two as a sort of cry for help from the depths, but no. R.I.P.

Brushing aside for the moment other notable achievers — Mr Campbell (nourishing soups), Mr Westinghouse (brakes), Mr Harpic (pan freshness) — I would like to express a warm appreciation of all diarists for providing us with what must surely be literature's most easily readable and fascinating material. Who, starting on the diary of that MP man-about-town, Chips Channon and instantly hooked by the heady and upper-crust goings-on, does not read, goggle-eyed, to the end? It is the same with Waugh, Beeton and Nicolson. It is, I don't doubt, the same with Virginia Woolf, though I have to confess to an unreasoning and totally blank spot as regards her, her work and all her over-exposed doings (a phrase which, oh dear, looks like some criminal offence in a court case, with a Judge saying accusingly 'How came you to forget yourself and act so immodestly in a public place?').

Let nobody imagine that acceptably readable diary-writing is easy stuff. Apart from anything else, to summon up at day's end the necessary energy to seize pen and, with the Kozyjamas and the Luxiduvet beckoning a welcome from the Sleepeasie while the mug of Ovaltine, a creamy miracle of slumber-promise, steams away on an occasional, scribble down the required thousand or so words is an outstanding achievement in itself, even disregarding the quality of the work. For publication, diarists doubtless prune and cut and even add, but it still remains a remarkable feat. All one could manage oneself would be a hurried 'Dozed in p.m.' or 'Cooked my dinner. Ate my dinner. Washed up my dinner.'

From such criticisms, dear Mrs Dale, ever first in the field, must be at once excluded. Nobody was less self-absorbed (her constant cry of 'I'm worried about Jim' proves it), as wireless listeners will recall from the happy days when she brightened teatime. The BBC polished her, alas, ruthlessly off and while musing on this and other, to me, unfortunate departures and changes, I fell to wondering to what extent BBC Publications keep their output in print. 'The Biggest Aspidistra in the World' means to many people only Gracie Fields at her merriest, but to others it means in addition the quite excellent 'personal celebration of fifty years of the BBC', Peter Black's contribution in 1972 to the history of wireless and television and providing invaluable source-material for future students.

The book remains the liveliest bran-pie of assorted delights and Memory's Corridors ring and ring again. Here, for example, are the origins of 'The Archers' together with the very first words ever uttered in that famous series. Dan Archer was discovered, together with his cowhand, Simon, preparing for the imminent birth of a calf and with, presumably, the COW MOO effects record turned well up. 'Well, Simon. What do you think?' asked Dan, to which Simon was heard to reply 'Ah well — 'er might and 'er might not', thus neatly encapsulating, and over thirty years ago, one of the principal *splendeurs et misères* of a farmer's life. Another famous name that lives on is that of genial Commander Campbell, allegedly the first person ever to have given an unscripted broadcast, though there are claims for Lord Birkenhead and Hugh Walpole, and who stated that he had a friend the top of whose head used to steam after he had eaten marmalade. He also said that he could sleep with his eyes wide open and knew the answer to the *Marie Celeste* riddle. He appeared frequently on 'The Brains Trust', the members of which were asked on one occasion to name what was for them the most beautiful word in the English language. Ernest Barker provided 'felicity'. Rose Macaulay chose 'oblivion'. And the Commander, after some thought, came through with 'paraffin'.

Care to join me for a ramble through some past and purely audible delights? Very well then. Clamp on those headphones, adjust the cat's whisker, and away we go. There was Children's Hour with its immensely jolly uncles and aunties who sometimes appeared at public functions to wild acclaim (Uncle Edgar once kissed 800 Birmingham children in an hour), the programme later producing the charming 'Toytown' series and the marvellous 'Out With Romany' nature talks. There was Mabel Constanduros and her cockney Buggins family with the fearful Grandma Buggins determinedly getting the better of everybody and, during the war, dispensing early morning cooking recipes, referred to as 'something tasty to clash yer teeth into.' There was also the first smash hit radio musical, written by Eric Maschwitz and George Posford and called 'Goodnight Vienna', which subsequently became an early Wilcox talking picture, as we called them, with Jack Buchanan and Anna Neagle. Wishing to cash in on its success as a film, the authors sent out a theatrical tour of it in Britain, with somewhat varying results. Catching it one day in Huddersfield, Eric Maschwitz asked the theatre manager how they were liking it in Yorkshire. 'About as well as they'd like a musical called "Goodnight Huddersfield" in Vienna.' □

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LETTERS

Goodies and baddies

From Phillip Whitehead MP & Austin Mitchell MP

The media have little empathy for our party's idiosyncratic ways. They show an obsessive interest in internal matters which we may feel aren't intended for outside, or even adult consumption. They personalise. There may even be bias. Yet assertion does not prove it and contrary biases are not the best detection instrument. Indeed research work of the calibre of Philo, Hewitt and Beharrel ('The bias in the television image', *NS* 23 January) inhibits clear-headed analysis of Labour's situation and of the consequences of what we do. It will certainly comfort us in our fractious ways. It's not our fault. It's a media plot.

Three major points are made. Much depends on the letter sent out by the Labour Coordinating Committee. For the Philocrats to endorse the committee's own view of it as merely 'a letter recommending local constituency parties to summon their MPs to explain how they intended to vote' is surely naive when parties were being asked to vote their own preference, then demand that the MP fill in his ballot paper on their instructions, all this with the explicit threat that 'a new era of cooperation from MPs will come with reselection'. Yet much of the analysis is predicated on their idiosyncratic and over-charitable interpretation. The more widely held view that the letter was at best a crude interference in the complex relationships between member and party, at worst a form of blackmail, and the fact that the letter dominated the news in the period they studied both guarantee that accusations of bullying against the left would predominate. Theirs is a self-fulfilling prophecy, not objective research. By opening up the question of the relationship between member and party, the letter also determined the pattern of questioning of Meacher and others. The Philosophists assert that Meacher was 'one of its authors'. Our information is that the letter was sent out in the name of the Coordinating Committee but that they were not responsible for the wording, so that Meacher was in the embarrassing position of defending the indefensible. This and the issues raised by the letter made it inevitable that it should set the pattern of the questioning.

As for the authors' counter-argument that 'right-wing' figures should have been asked 'what have you got against people knowing how you vote' as an antidote, we know of none who have not given their local party this information. The authors praise the coverage of the Islington discussion yet omit to mention that George Cunningham MP made it perfectly clear that he intended to act in un-Coordinating Committee fashion by making his own mind up.

Coverage of the Barnsley row may have been inaccurate in indicating that miners dominated the party. Yet the Philosophists totally fail to give any counter indication of how strong the miners actually were as a proportion of the total General Committee and of that particular meeting. The NUM's huge block (probably over 70), personally led by Mr Scargill and linked to other delegates of like persuasion, is certain to dominate. Indeed their power to do so had been demonstrated only shortly before by the rejection of the existing party chairman. So all the Philosophists are doing is nit-picking about numbers. Beyond this, so what? There was an unusual degree of activity on the part of the NUM. There was clearly a problem in the relationship between MP and party. All this merited coverage and no analyst can put himself in the situation of saying that enquiry into the left's activities indicates a bias to the right.

Problems are inevitable when complex situations are compressed. Over-simplification creeps in. So does shorthand, though perhaps the right has more grounds for objecting to being described as 'right', a term certain to harm their prospects in today's party than a 'left', which gets its own self-image endorsed and is able to wear it as a campaign badge. Yet it is hardly reasonable to define all this as systematic bias, still less so to object to the interaction between these inevitable distortions and that process of continuous creation of controversy by which we manage our internal party 'arrangements'. We can hardly grumble at the lack of public discussion on the real issues facing this country when we enthusiastically provide so many and such distracting sideshows.

House of Commons, London SW1

Daydreaming on the left

From Tom Nairn

In his article on the social democratic split (*NS* 23 Jan.) Peter Kellner chose the most unfortunate of examples to show the doom in store for them. At an actual election, he suggested, 'the daydreaming will have to stop' as it did during the referendum on Scottish devolution in 1979. 'When the real nitty-gritty was put on offer and exposed to detailed debate, the majority evaporated' and people returned to their senses.

This verdict is quite false. The self-government majority evaporated from exposure to a funk-inducing campaign — not to the fine print on the Devolution Act, which most voters remained indifferent to. Projected into a climate of growing economic fear and self-doubt, that campaign's hysteria did convert many people to the (essentially Thatcherite) view that more government would mean worse government. A large number of these have now returned to their senses.

Mr Kellner's mistake is all the stranger since it accompanies the Glasgow Media Group's latest analysis of media hysterics. Surely the lesson of this, and our referendum experience, would be the opposite of what he suggests, if applied to a social democratic breakaway movement? Will the latter not be sustained by a massive ideological onslaught, to transform the 'daydreaming' into political reality? Real nitty-gritty may have little to do with what then happens.

The Bulletin of Scottish Politics, 58 Queen Street, Edinburgh

Rentokil's risks

From Elspeth McVeigh, Labour Research Department

The letter from J. David of the British Wood Preserving Association (*NS* 23 January) is interesting for its re-appraisal of events. From my correspondence with them last year it was quite clear that they were happily unaware of the growing controversy surrounding the use of PCP.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, whose opinion the BWPA rate so highly, were questioned about PCP (Hansard 24 Nov. 1980). In their written answer of 27 November, the Ministry claimed that PCP is 'readily broken down in soil and by animals', a claim unsubstantiated by any scientific evidence. Unfortunately for us all PCP is a chemical characterised by its persistence.

The BWPA appear to be confused about which government department is responsible for monitoring the use of chemicals in Britain. As the name suggests, it is in fact the Department of the Environment, advised by the Advisory Committee on Pesticides and the HSE. The series of Parliamentary questions were quite correctly addressed to them.

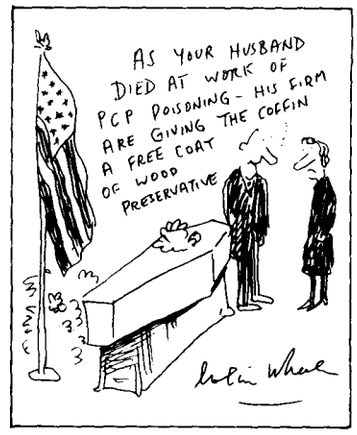
However, I did check with the HSE to see if they were aware of the US studies when I was writing the article. They were not. Additionally I knew that the Advisory Committee on Pesticides had been approached by the Industrial Welfare Department of the TUC in June 1980 concerning the toxicity or otherwise of PCP. They were assured that there was no cause for alarm but that the Department would be informed of any new developments. To date they have not been contacted again.

By their dismissive treatment of the US studies the BWPA are deluding themselves into a false sense of security. The old chestnut that animal studies cannot be extrapolated to man does not bear examination. Without exception, substances found to cause cancer in animals, when studied epidemiologically in humans, have subsequently been found to cause cancer in man.

Certainly *fatal* doses of PCP could hardly lead to cancer or anything else in the long term, but the BWPA may be interested to know that two deaths of workers as a result of poisoning by PCP were reported to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration in the US during 1980.

My latest information is that Canada has now joined Sweden and Japan in banning PCP as a wood preservative.

78 Blackfriars Road, London SE1



Mortgage finance

From Jamie Stevenson, Economic Adviser, The House-builders Federation

Steve Schifferes's article, 'The twenty year wait' (*NS* 19/26 December), contains a misleading distortion on mortgage finance. He states that 'this week's decision to raise the limit on some building society loans from £25,000 to £37,000 shows the Government is still determined to preserve the regressive subsidy to owner occupiers'.

The Government's decision was to raise the ceiling above which a building society advance is classified as a 'special advance'. The relevance of this ceiling is that the proportion of 'special advances' cannot exceed legally 10 per cent of the total advances made by building societies. This ceiling has nothing whatsoever to do with the 'mortgage tax relief ceiling' of £25,000 which limits the amount of an advance on which tax relief against the interest payments is allowed.

The purpose of raising the 'special advance' ceiling is simply to allow building societies greater room for meeting the demands of those who wish to borrow more than £25,000; it carries absolutely no implications for the amount of tax relief available to borrowers.

82 New Cavendish Street, London W1

Steve Schifferes replies: Jamie Stevenson is quite correct to point out the error concerning mortgage tax relief in my article. This crept in at the final editing stage as we were going to press when I was misinformed by a usually reliable source that this change had just been announced in Parliament. The actual change that was announced is, in fact, designed to protect the interests of building societies in relation to those of banks, who have increasingly been lending for house purchase at the higher end of the spectrum.

69 The Vale, London W3

Fighting for community radio

From J. M. Smith, a director of Radio Basildon

There is a further important element of broadcasting not touched on by Jonathan Coe and Simon Blanchard (*NS* 16 January).

A handful of community radio stations have been established in the face of indifference and hostility from both government and the broadcasting establishment. One highly successful community station is Radio Basildon. It serves 23,000 cable subscribers in the New Town with 12 hours a day of community programmes. The audience is sufficiently large for the station to be supported almost entirely by advertising. Radio Basildon is the only alternative to a local press monopoly.

Several of us connected with Radio Basildon made a bid last year for the local commercial franchise. We feared it would end up in the hands of local businessmen, including the local newspaper. It did.

If community radio stations are to succeed they must be permitted to transmit over the airwaves. Of course the Home Office has frequently said during the past 20 years that frequencies are not available. However, there has been no difficulty in slotting in commercial stations.

It is unfortunate that the Labour Party, which constantly criticises the press, has failed to promote community broadcasting. Surely a local community is as entitled to the freedom of access to its airwaves as it is to the freedom to print and publish.

The Home Office Local Radio Working Party will make recommendations to the Home Secretary in April on the future of community cable radio. We are pressing for a transmitter. It is, however, difficult to be optimistic.

43A Southview Drive, Westcliff-on-Sea, Essex

Information wanted

Korean War and British involvement: I am doing some research and would be very grateful for any personal stories or reminiscences that your readers could supply. Total confidentiality will be respected.

Frances Crook, 211B High Road, London N2

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Glyn Ford on botany and the British empire

Gin & tonic

THE TWO growth areas of the last few years are video games and studies of the social history of science. The latter should be unequivocally welcomed. No more is science seen as a value-free form of knowledge that inevitably imposes its logic and results upon society. No more is the history of science seen as the arrow in Zeno's paradox ever approaching but never closing with absolute truth.

In their separate ways both of these books illustrate this new perspective; where science is seen as both a product *and* a moulder of society. The first is a beautifully illustrated apolitical history of the Victorian mania for natural history, while the latter is a 'marxist' analysis of botany's contribution to imperialism.

The Heyday of Natural History traces in some detail the wave of fashion that brought the subject in from the cold and as far as the boudoir. Natural history helped to fill in the 'interminable leisure hours' opening up in front of the emerging middle class. It was entertaining, provided useful instruction and, most importantly, provided evidence of God's beneficence in creating the natural world for the use of mankind and in particular the English. Natural history was a celebration of religion. It was nothing more nor less than the enumeration and classification of the product of God's handiwork.

This enthusiasm embraced all classes from Lancashire weavers through to the aristocracy; even women. A hearty welcome was extended to working-class devotees of the study, especially when, like Hugh Miller, they urged their fellow workers to avoid the snares of Chartism by taking up natural history. The ladies were a problem. The sexual classification of plants by Linnaeus was thought to be more than female modesty could endure. As a result texts were prepared omitting these indelicacies.

The majority of enthusiasts were never more than mere specimen collectors. Yet some made solid contributions to natural history. H. W. Bates, one collector who turned his hobby into a profession, discovered in the Amazon 8,000 new species. Yet over-all this popular enthusiasm, and its associated science, was flawed. It took place in a vacuum. The magazines and journals for the devotees of this static, desiccated science were silent on the debates about the 'Age of the Earth' and 'Evolution'. Its leaders, Richard Owen, Roderick Murchison and Louis Agassiz, were swept into the footnotes of history when the power of Darwin's evolutionism struck home. The piety of nature as the product of the artisan watchmaker was destroyed as Darwin showed its production was the result not of skilled craftsmanship but of blind variation meeting savage destruction. In many senses Hugh Miller, the working-class naturalist and theologian made good, summed up the impact of Darwin on the popular enthusiasm for natural history. Miller committed suicide.

Barber shows us an aspect of mid-Victorian science separate from the inchoate preamble to Darwin more commonly seen as the totality of science of the period. *This* science had different problems, different purposes and was a positive barrier to Evolution. It was a regression from much that had come before and as such it is important to know about it.

As the second book points out, British society is littered with relics of our history. Gin and tonic is one of them. The managers of our Indian Empire in the late 19th century found that the most pleasant way to take their 'medicine' was to combine it with their before-dinner drinks. The function has died, but like the House of Lords, the institution remains. *Science and Colonial Expansion* puts this minor historical excursion into a wider perspective.

Britain and the other countries of Western Europe dragged themselves across the barrier between feudalism and industrialisation by mobilising world capital in its broadest sense. They used precious metals, plants, animals and technology as tools to speed up the exploitation of colonies. This is a study of how Kew Gardens contributed with enthusiasm its 'mite' to the support and furtherance of colonialism; and how this both maintained and changed the nature of imperialism.

Kew, established in 1841, became the central institution of a global network of scientists specialising in economic botany, drawing together in the process the work of collectors who ranged the world searching for plants whose properties or appearance offered a profit. Even the private collectors, like Bates, looked at their victims with the eye of imperialism. As far as the work centred around Kew went, it was impossible to draw the line between science, commerce and imperialism. This did not trouble Kew's directors, whose rationale was 'aiding the Mother Country in everything that is useful in the vegetable Kingdom'. This role meant Kew acted as a kind of scientific clearing house; new plants were sought out, obtained by fair means or foul, brought to England for evaluation and improvement, finally transhipped to the colonies for exploitation. Kew's role is best demonstrated in the three case studies of plant transfers — Cinchona, Rubber and Sisal — included in the book. These were all plants native to South and Central America which were transferred, more or less successfully, from there via Kew to Asia.

The reason, Brockway suggests, for these transfers was that in South America Britain lacked full control and labour was both in short supply and unreliable. In Asia both control and labour were available. For example, in India Britain had a pliant, formal colony whose displaced peasants made ideal disciplined plantation labour. In some cases both plant and labour were transported, with British pockets benefiting from South American rubber grown on Malayan plantations and harvested by Indian labour. The transfers themselves were not simple. Numerous attempts were made to transfer rubber to Kew. It was only finally achieved when forebears of the rubber trees in Malaysia today were smuggled out under the noses of Brazilian customs officials.

The broad picture Lucile Brockway paints of botany as *one* of the servants of imperialism is well-drawn. Yet when she attempts to apply this same marxist approach at a more detailed level one's credulity is stretched to the limit, as the picture dissolves into a multitude of individual events. For example, in the Nilgiri Hills of India the plantation system was not pushed to its logical extreme, she says, because the British wanted to protect the environment for their own enjoyment.

With regard to sisal, the fact that the *Kew Bulletin* published information enabling Germany to establish a profitable sisal industry in its African colonies is explained by saying 'Botanical imperialism had shifted by the end

The Heyday of Natural History by LYNN BARBER *Cape* £9.50

Science and Colonial Expansion: The Role of the British Royal Botanic Gardens by LUCILE H. BROCKWAY *Academic Press* £13.60

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of the 19th century from organised plant raids to the diffusion of information among the scientific and technological élite of the world'. At this level Brockway's marxism explains so much that it explains nothing.

Yet it is worth reading for the chapter on Cinchona alone, which offers a couple of interesting insights. First, the introduction of quinine, particularly into India, promoted racism.

For following its introduction there was a flood of English women joining their husbands on colonial service. With the coming of family ties the British began to congregate separately. No longer was the white man a temporary bachelor who sought company and often a wife among the natives. He was now a family man who had a tradition to uphold and a taboo to enforce by distance. This apartheid was legitimised through racism.

Second, quinine enabled a prolonging of Empire. As a senior British Army officer wrote, 'if portions of Britannia's tropical empire are upheld by the bayonet, the arm that wields the weapon would be nerveless but for the Cinchona bark and its active principles'. Thus, in 1890, when Britain faced an economic crisis as severe as today's, we were able to opt for further colonisation rather than the modernisation we are still awaiting. □

FICTION — 1

Alan Hollinghurst

Wordy wisdom

The Death of Robin Hood by PETER VANSITTART *Peter Owen* £7.50
A Good Man In Africa by WILLIAM BOYD *Hamish Hamilton* £6.95
The Vet's Daughter by BARBARA COMYNS *Virago* £2.50

The writing of Peter Vansittart appeals to a specialised taste, one that relishes a view of history as a teeming, vivid, unruly fairground of experience, jostling with brilliant detail and palpable immediacy, while on the other hand liking this material to be co-ordinated by a numinous formal and symbolic arrangement that imposes a deeper portentousness. The reader must relive the actuality of the past as a way of being educated in its relevance to the present. *The Death of Robin Hood* has an extremely ambitious and peculiar structure. Its principal section is set in the reign of Richard I, centring on John and his daughter Eleanor, and the following section deals with machine-breaking in 1812 when another Eleanor (a mysterious recreation of the former one) is arrested for sheltering Luddites. The final section is set in the 1930s. The whole thing takes place in Nottinghamshire and is preceded by a prologue set in Sherwood Forest in primeval times. In all four sections the myth of Robin Hood as a hero, a fertility-figure, a liberator, exerts a symbolic power over the minds of the protagonists. The perpetuation of this myth is strengthened by Vansittart's way of counterbalancing historical accuracy with a fantastic treatment of time; like his reincarnated Eleanor, he sees 'people live for centuries, or merge into each other as they do in dreams, everything constantly reborn. . .' Such a technique makes the creation of historical 'rhymes' between different periods all the easier.

The idea then is highly original and suggestive, but the actual writing, unless one has a taste for it, is an obstacle to its success. In the first section we see uncertainty about nature-myths proliferate in the primitive mind on account of the growth of words — and this section itself is a nightmare to read, effectively as obscure as the forest and the rites it describes. In the later parts of the book the temptation of words becomes irresistible, and Vansittart uses a dense and highly mannered style to create his tumultuous and compendious impression of history:

> Blain-tettered cripples besought gallants spendthrift with satin and stardust: trade winds blew England's bright ensigns to the edges of the world, fire lifted the hair of those screaming at the stake.

Things occur too fast for normal description: 'and' and the definite article are largely suppressed, and commas become the weak articulation of clotted sentences: 'Fires inflamed the whole town lit by flash-hatted Brutus, demonic Marat, defrocked priests, half-naked, blue-trousered Irish.' Literary quotation is richly interlarded as if Vansittart had given up any attempt at kicking the habit, and a quantity of epigrams adds to the self-admiring posture of the performance. We enjoy an uncontested intimacy with historical figures — Kings are Richard, John; Churchill is Winston, MacDonald Ramsay. The tics of a mannered style become insufferable long before the eventlessness of a dull one. Which is a shame, because unless one can surrender oneself to the torrent of Vansittart's prose, a fascinating concept has been irreparably spoiled in the execution.

Overwriting is the only thing that occasionally spoils *A Good Man in Africa,* William Boyd's first novel, and one which is in every other respect highly controlled; Boyd is clearly a comic writer with a very successful career ahead of him. The comedy is of an Amisian cast, focusing on embarrassment and disaster, social, sexual and political. There is no room for sentiment or for the finer feelings, and social manners and political pressures only just manage to clothe and contain feelings of naked revulsion and contempt between the principal characters. The novel has a sweaty tropical setting in which dead bodies rapidly become unapproachable and live ones, even if lusted for, have a certain grotesquery. The protagonist, Morgan Leafy, is pale and fat, and in public and private life (he is First Secretary to a Deputy High Commission) he undergoes a herculean series of labours with varying degrees of failure. Boyd knows his West Africa and recreates it in full and interesting detail.

The middle part of the story, chronologically, is told first, though this seems an unnecessary fidelity to the *in medias res* catastrophe managed with such virtuosity. Everything that can go awry for Leafy does, and no screw is left unturned. This great thoroughness in pursuing the comic objective has potential disadvantages, and Boyd's manner at times allows extravagance and hyperbole to become automatic:

> As the red mist of virulent wrath dimmed his view, Morgan felt like plucking the eyes from Jones's face, stamping his head to a pulp, ramming all types of fiendishly blunt uneven instruments into his various orifices, but instead, by a ruthless act of self-control, he managed a twisted, white-lipped smile. . .

On the other hand the strong physical identification of the characters displays the more serious gift of using a comic shorthand at the same time as going beyond it to suggest a confusion of feelings, particularly between disgust and lust. The pampered, powdered whiteness of Leafy's boss's wife is viewed with an ambiguous fascination, which explodes in the bizarre final pages of the novel.

Virago have reissued Barbara Comyns's best-known book, and it is good to think that its cult will now spread among a much wider audience. Told in the first person by a young girl, its vividness and innocence have the revelatory intensity of the narrations of Pip or young David Copperfield. It projects its fantastic story with a tangible realness and manages to make public and inevitable a realm of private sensation close to nightmare. Comyns has also written an interesting autobiographical introduction to this new edition of her wonderful and original novel. □

Paperback news

Dave Harker's *One for the Money: Politics and Popular Song*, published by Hutchinson and reviewed in our issue of 19/26 December, is also available in paperback at £3.95.

OUP have recently published the following titles in their World's Classics series: Henry James's *Roderick Hudson* (£1.95), *The Selected Letters of Sydney Smith* (£2.50), Henry Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* and *Shamela* (£1.95) and Benjamin Disraeli's *Sybil* (£2.25).

Penguin's recent issues include Ronald Fraser's *Blood of Spain* at £4.95 and on 2 February Faber are publishing William Golding's *Darkness Visible* at £1.95. When it was first published in 1979 Craig Raine said in the *NS* that he didn't expect to read a better novel that year than this 'gripping metaphysical thriller'.

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Nicolas Walter

From sword to pen

The Christie File by STUART CHRISTIE *Partisan/ Cienfuegos* £6

Stuart Christie has been the best-known British anarchist — at least to the police and the press — all his adult life, ever since he was caught smuggling explosives into Spain at the age of 18. At the age of 34 he is still an active revolutionary, and *The Christie File* is his political autobiography — a rare person and a rare book in this country; indeed they scarcely are in this country. Christie finished it after establishing an anarchist publishing business on the island of Sanday in the Orkneys, almost as far as you can go without actually emigrating, and after being rejected by Michael Joseph it has been published in the United States by the Partisan Press, being distributed in Britain by his own Cienfuegos Press.

What he has produced is an unremarkable record of a remarkable life, worth reading not so much on its own account as on account of what he has done and what has been done to him. The story starts conventionally enough. Christie comes from a Scottish working-class family, was attracted to the left while still at school, and joined the Young Socialists while training as a dental mechanic. He was influenced by the Committee of 100 and the Solidarity Group, the Spies for Peace and the Scots Against War, and moved to the militant wing of the anarchist movement and to London. This is where the difference from others with a similar history began, but it isn't really clear why or how this happened. Like many others, Christie was inspired by the anarchist resistance to Franco but, like few others, he actually joined it, volunteering as an explosives courier in 1964.

Since then his life has been more public than private. The account of his journey to and arrest in Spain is still guarded, but it seems clear that the Spanish political police had not only allies in the British political police but also agents among the Spanish exiles in France or Britain or both. Christie was sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment for 'terrorism and banditry', and spent three years in Spanish prisons before being amnestied. This is the most interesting part of the book in the superficial sense that it will be most unfamiliar to most readers. When he returned to Britain he also returned to anarchist militancy, having gained both contacts and caution. He stayed with the class-war fraction of the movement, but he has been increasingly more open and flexible than his colleagues.

What he has done is remarkable enough — he initiated the Anarchist Black Cross, an international organisation to support libertarian prisoners all over the world, he edited its bulletin, which became the monthly *Black Flag*, and he became involved in more permanent publishing projects, culminating in the Cienfuegos Press — but what has been done to him is also remarkable. From the time of his release in 1967 he was continually harried and harassed by the press and the police, being followed, questioned, libelled, searched, and twice arrested and tried — in 1968 for possession of detonators in connection with the Angry Brigade. The first case got him a conviction but no imprisonment, the second got him an acquittal but 16 months' imprisonment on remand before the trial was over. Attempts to implicate him in the Persons Unknown case in 1979 failed mainly because he was 600 miles away from London.

His account of these episodes is fascinating because it is almost the only first-hand version of what happened, but it is also frustrating because, although he may tell nothing but the truth, he still can't tell the whole truth. At least, it is clear, however, that the press broke all the laws of defamation and contempt and that the police tried to frame him more than once — and, incidentally, that prison conditions are worse in Britain than in Spain. *The Christie File* is obviously valuable because it names unpleasant names and forces us to face unpleasant facts, though some of its value is lost because of Christie's weakness on historical and political details. But in the end it is more valuable because it gives a personal account of how a socialist became an anarchist and then of how a boy who failed to assassinate Franco became a man who succeeded in establishing the most active libertarian publishing business in the English-speaking world. Stuart Christie has turned from propaganda by deed to propaganda by word, with much greater effect — a paradox worth pondering. □

FICTION — 2

Ben Okri

Arms & the man

The Non-Believer's Journey by S. NYAMFUKUDZA *Heinemann* £1.95
Remember Ruben by MONGO BETI *Heinemann* £3.40

The long liberation struggle in Zimbabwe is fertile material for fiction which explores the relationship between individual commitment and a violent national situation. In *The Non-Believer's Journey,* Nyamfukudza looks at the converse of this relationship by presenting the fatal dialectic of an intelligent individual's *non*-commitment. Sam, the main character, a teacher in Highfields, Salisbury, is something of an anti-hero.

It starts on a Sunday morning with Sam, hung over, moving from nausea to ordinary clumsiness. He startles an old man who has come to deliver a letter informing him that his uncle has been murdered as an informer. Sam is irritated — '. . . something like this comes along and you suddenly realise just how deep in they are, and you, too, have just been dragged into the mess' — but he submits to tradition. He is to go home for the funeral. From the energetic depiction of Sam's empty, desperate night-life, we learn that he is cynical and in many ways unsympathetic to the various freedom struggles. But below this surface Sam really is quite lost.

His journey back to the village becomes a historical stock-taking: 'It was as if he and all those around him had been insidiously dissociated from the realities of time and space . . .' At a road block near Mrewa Sam has a confrontation with a young white soldier who resents his status as a teacher and his good English. The bus is delayed and slowly searched. A passenger suddenly dashes away, leaving his bundle behind. Not long afterwards a helicopter with a machine-gun scuds past plunging for another victim.

In the village there are serious indications of tension, quietly exposed. Sam's brother is going to join the 'boys', as the guerrillas are called. 'The boys' come to the village at night and the leader calls Sam away into the bush where he asks him to help smuggle medicine, food or bullets. Sam is trapped in a situation larger than his cynicism. He says 'no', the discussion heats up and there is a foolish fatality.

The Non-Believer's Journey is well written, its scenes drawn with ironic confidence, the failure of intellectual individualism vividly presented. Its subject is important and, as a picture of a place and of the lostness of a city people, its realism is admirable and sometimes disturbing. The war does not come into the book directly, except in the roadblock incident and the comings and goings of 'the boys'. But there is heavy tension — between intellectuals and fighters, between the confusions of city life and the ravaged villages that bear the brunt of the war. The novel has a purposeful pointlessness, but as scene follows scene it finally misses its own point. It is rounded up as though the author did not quite know what to do with his story and character. But S. Nyamfukudza writes tight, energetic prose and, when all is said, *The Non-Believer's Journey* is a worthwhile book indeed.

Mongo Beti's *Remember Ruben* also treats of the relationship between individuals and a complex, clouded situation of emerging national politics. When a solitary, young boy arrives at the village of Ekoumdoum, a new dimension enters village life. The youth, renamed Mor-Zamba, lost, coldly reticent and taunted by the villagers, attracts to himself another youth, Abena, a future revolutionary. Abena's sole ambition, symbolically, is to 'get a gun'. Mor-zamba's ambition to have the daughter of a prominent villager for wife stirs up forces of hostility which lead to his being taken off to a labour camp. Abena goes to look for him, and from then on their actions become larger than their characters. Abena, still in search of a gun, signs up as a driver of military vehicles in the second world war. Mor-zamba becomes more and more involved in political activity.

Behind everything lurks Ruben, trade union leader, relentless critic of national politics, and later guerrilla leader, whose personality links together the forces of protest. He is a mythical figure, never confronted in the narrative. After his death the phrase 'Remember Ruben' becomes a rallying call and reminder of the need for continuous vigilance.

Beti's depiction of a colony's traumas, confusions and corruptions is vivid and masterly. His treatment of the forces of history and the determination of ordinary individuals recalls Ngugi at his best. But *Remember Ruben* frequently gets bogged down, characters and story line lost, in its documentary portrayal of the patterns and details of colonial politics. The language is elevated, the author using the inclusive 'our' as though the novel were written as a general testament of the village of Ekoumdoum. The style is sometimes grand, sometimes tiresome, but always its energy rolls:

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But despite all this, Fort Negre teases its brain to torment Kola-kola, the incarnation of its remorse, the swelling denial of its mystic fantasies, the cancer clasped to its side which robbed it of sleep, the seething distress which, like the reflected image of a huge rat-run, began to be the theme of the world's concern, like the mirror of an immense rat-age.

In the end Abena returns, a hero with the new name of Ouragen-viet, in time to save Kola-kola, the huge black suburb, from destruction. After 18 years there is a reunion with Mor-zamba, and the contrived revelation of Mor-zamba's true origins. Again, the end disappoints, but this does not altogether detract from the novel's importance. □

Michael Hofmann

Furth i. Wald

There are seagulls inland, extensive flooding
and a grey sky. A tractor stalled in midfield
between two goals. Mammoth sawmills
collecting trees
and pulping them for furniture and
wallpaper . . .
These strips of towns, with their
troubled histories,
they are lost in the woods like Hansel
and Gretel.
Counters at peace-conferences, they
changed hands
so often, they became indistinguishable,
worthless.
Polygot and juggled like Belgium, each of
them keeps
a spare name in the other language to fall
back on.
Only their wanton, spawning frontier tells
them apart,
an arrogant line of wire in an electric clearing.
(A modern derivative of the civic myth
of Thebes:
the oxhide cut into ribbons by cunning
estate agents
and laid end to end; so many towns called
Cuernavaca . . .)
— At other frontiers, it may be a long
tunnel instead,
too long for you to hold your breath.
At halfway,
the texture of the concrete changes, and
the lights,
but you can't say where it is brighter
or safer . . .
Nations are irregular parcels, tight with fear
But their contents have settled during
transport.
Grenzflucht. Perimeters that are deserted
now and
timid, the dream-wrappings clash with
each other.
On one side, the lonely heartless villas of
the guards.
Dustbins stored like sandbags outside
barrackrooms.
The play of searchlights . . . On the other,
Der Neue
Tag dawns only twice a week nowadays.
With its
Nazi-sounding name and millenarian
ideals, still
holding the fort for a dwindling
readership . . .

Andrew Clements reviews recent classical record releases

Interpreters at work

THE SECOND volume of Artur Schnabel's Beethoven sonatas (EMI RLS 754, three records) will move any listener to even greater transports of delight and approval than the first, which I wrote about here in November. The present set takes the canon as far as the D minor sonata Op. 28; in subsequent issues — two more three-record sets I imagine — it will be uphill all the way. There are enough foretastes already of what we can expect in the late sonatas: the simplicity with which the D minor sonata is presented could be transferred with equal success to the A major Op. 101; the bucolic humour of the opening of the B flat Op. 22 looks forward to Opp. 78 and 90. But even in the smaller, less ambitious sonatas of Op. 10 and Op. 14 there are continual surprises and felicities. Schnabel's control of tone and nuance never fails him; his ability to channel emotional and intellectual energy into a single comprehensive view compels attention. There are still the miffs and fluffs in rapid passages and equally passages of similar difficulty that are negotiated without a fault. Were Schnabel's textures not so limpid, his pedalling not designed to clarify rather than obscure, then many of these blemishes would pass unnoticed. As it is, they still matter little in the context of such complete performances, which give a more universal view of these works than any others on record. In such splendidly refurbished sound — lean and crystalline, and faithfully reflecting the pianist's own sound world — the sets should be bought by anyone with the remotest interest in Beethoven.

There are elements in Rudolf Serkin's playing which bring him close to the universality of Schnabel. But in old age he is a frustratingly uneven pianist; to him I owe some of my most magical memories of live performance and also some of the most tedious moments. His more recent records have reflected this variability; perhaps the most successful have been those recorded live. A new issue of Brahms — the Handel Variations and the Piano Pieces Op. 119 (CBS 76913) — demonstrates this inconsistency well. The Pieces sound tired and laboured; the B minor Intermezzo is perversely unmagical, lacking any poise, the C major dogged rather than graceful. But the Handel Variations generate the familiar muscularity and intellectual rigour; there is never any attempt to ingratiate or to produce a beautiful tone, but there is an electricity in much of the playing, a delight in the mechanics of the music which makes for its own excitement.

Another Brahms issue from an equally distinguished though much younger pianist is a more consistent disappointment. Maurizio Pollini's disc of the second Brahms piano concerto came out a couple of years ago and impressed then for its nobility and unrhetorical grandeur. But the companion disc of the first concerto (Deutsche Grammophon 2531 294) is dull and uneventful, a perverse reversal of the qualities of the two concertos. Basic reasoning would suggest that Pollini would find more in the earlier D minor concerto, in its demands for a superlative virtuosity and an ability to impose itself upon and dominate the orchestra. But the clue to the failure may lie in the conductors of the two concertos. For both the orchestra was the Vienna Philharmonic; but the second had Abbado as director, and here it is Karl Böhm. The combination is enervating. Böhm does the basics efficiently enough, but does little to inject life or pace into the performance. I own to a basic dislike of Böhm's conservative approach to the repertory he conducts, to its concentration on presenting the musical text unadorned, without any attempt at imaginative interpretation. Here he merely reinforces Pollini's natural reticence, and steadfastly undervalues the drama of the score. Even the introductory flourishes are unexciting, so much so that the first entry of the soloist is not the magical oasis of calm poetry it should be, but merely more grey, under-inflected note-spinning.

Artur Schnabel

FOR MANY wise Mahlerians, Klaus Tennstedt has become in last year or so the leading conductor of the symphonies. His live performances, most recently of the seventh symphony at the Edinburgh Festival and in London (an account which came nearer than any other to reconciling the impossible structural problems it presents), have been complemented by the steady progress of a recorded cycle for EMI. The latest instalment is the third (EMI SLS 5195, two records) with the London Philharmonic and Ortrun Wenkel as contralto soloist, the symphony that sorts out real Mahlerians from fellow travellers, and great conductors from also-rans. Tennstedt emerges from the examination with flying colours; his tempo for the first movement is massively measured, savouring every moment of Mahler's most prolix symphonic structure yet binding it together with a singlemindedness which compels respect. I'm afraid that it is still a work which makes a fellow traveller of me as far as Mahler is concerned, but listening to Tennstedt bringing the last movement home in such glorious fashion, the LPO's strings immensely warm, almost converted me.

The tenth, by contrast, needs no such special

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pleading, only more performances. Deryck Cooke's 'performing version' may not be an exact completion according to Mahler's intentions — for a composer who made so many revisions to his scores as he did that would be almost impossible — but it sounds authentically like Mahler. Nevertheless a number of conductors (including Giulini) have refused to countenance Cooke's edition, and for a long time the only entirely acceptable recorded version of the score was Ormandy's for CBS.

At the beginning of 1980 Simon Rattle conducted the work in the Festival Hall with the Philharmonia, a performance that was one of the special events of the year. But his recording, now released by EMI (SLS 5206, two records), has been made with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra. It deprives the performance of a clinching virtuosic edge; in the first movement a more refined string tone would give extra eloquence to Mahler's long-limbed themes and add weight to the devastating climax; in the scherzo second movement there could be more agility. But Rattle's approach to the work — a view of Mahler that surely owes a lot to his admiration for Boulez — plays down the orchestra's shortcomings. It is not sonorous, ripely romantic playing, but 20th-century in its outlook with every rhythm sharply pricked, and clarity put before warmth. This is Cooke's second edition of the score, with his further thoughts on some of the instrumentation, thickening a texture here, doubling a line there, and Rattle has made further small modifications of his own. The result is arguably the most consistent achievement among Mahler's numbered symphonies, its ground plan perfectly balanced between the great outer movements. The finale in particular is more convincing than any other among the ten Mahler symphonies.

THE IMPACT of Rattle's account is no doubt sharpened by its digital recording, which picks out instrumental detail unerringly and makes, for instance, the drum strokes at the beginning of the finale terrifyingly real. Tennstedt's Mahler 3 is also a digital recording, and so are three Russian symphonies from Decca and CBS. Bernard Haitink's account of Shostakovich's seventh with the London Philharmonic Orchestra (Decca D213D2, two records) is a further instalment in a complete cycle. The programme of the work as a depiction of the tribulations of the people of Leningrad during the early years of the second world war, has become muddied and confused by the composer's revelations in his posthumous memoirs, but it remains one of his most difficult works to bring off, viciously parodied first by Bartok in his concerto for orchestra and since then recorded only a few times. Haitink's sober and careful performance plays down the blatant propagandising and deflects attention from the infamous first movement towards the finale, making it a convincing if rowdy celebration.

Haitink's cycle is certainly one to follow, excellently recorded and played as it is. But Leonard Bernstein's version of the fifth symphony (CBS 35854, with the New York Philharmonic) presents a refreshing alternative view, quite unlike his previous version in approach and detail. Now, evidently, Bernstein feels the time has come to purge this most played of the Shostakovich symphonies of its rhetoric and to concentrate instead on its smaller-scale beauties. It comes as a surprise from the most glamour-filled of all conductors but it works well; a mood of cheerful optimism is sustained throughout, leaving tragedy behind even in the Largo. Simultaneously CBS has released Bernstein's recording of Prokofiev's fifth, with the Israel Philharmonic (35877). The cheerfulness here is already present, but Bernstein works too hard at freighting the symphony with expressiveness; textures become saturated, movement is replaced by stasis. At times Bernstein's sense of momentum deserts him entirely and the music hangs in the doldrums, completely becalmed and without relevance. □

FILMS

John Coleman

On your Nelly

Loulou (X) *Camden Plaza; Classic, Chelsea*
The Jazz Singer (A) *ABCs Shaftesbury Avenue, Bayswater, Fulham and Edgware Roads; Studio, Oxford Circus; Classic, Haymarket*
My Bodyguard (A) *Plaza 2; Studio, Oxford Circus; Odeons, Kensington, Westbourne Grove and Swiss Cottage.*

At long last London is celebrating the work of one of the finest French directors of the past decade or so. Maurice Pialat was over 40 when he made his first feature, *L'Enfance Nue,* the magnificently unsentimental study of a boy farmed out to various well-meaning adoptive families. It proved to be one of the high points of the 1968 London Film Festival. Four years later, at Cannes, there was *Nous Ne Vieillirons Pas Ensemble,* the fresh if protracted examination of the erosion of an affair between a married man and winsome girl friend: Jean Yanne picked up an acting award. Then the LFF of 1974 gave us *La Gueule Ouverte,* in which a family keep their pained distances until a woman dies of cancer, when emotions can find release.

These thumbnail summaries almost inevitably evoke a world of unrelieved gloom, a walk on the dark side, but that is because it is impossible to convey in a few words the countering and stimulating alertness of Pialat's observation: he may be deadly serious, but he is never deadeningly so. And it has been a mystery to those of us who have seen, admired and praised these films that (a BBC-TV showing of *La Gueule Ouverte* apart) no one has thought fit to pick them up for a larger audience. Now, with the arrival of Maurice Pialat's latest, *Loulou,* at a couple of cinemas, the National Film Theatre is mercifully presenting a short retrospective of his full-length works: all the foregoing titles, plus six hours of a TV serial, 'La Maison des Bois', and his 1979 feature *Passe Ton Bac D'Abord.* The little season will run from 2-7 February and is vehemently recommended.

Loulou has nothing to do with the fated lady of cinema and opera but refers to a thieving layabout and stud Louis (Gérard Depardieu), who casually achieves the sexual take-over of a well-bred girl Nelly (Isabelle Huppert) from her anguished advertising boss and lover André (Guy Marchand). This bleak, banal operation, ripe enough for an erotic melodrama or naughty wallow, is superlatively converted into an affair of substance. Pialat, who collaborated on the script with Arlette Langmann, has an unerring feel for the minutiae of *petit-bourgeois* and low life; and the rainy streets, dim hotel rooms and little cafés of Paris come alive with an easy naturalism that recalls and yet makes new a whole pre-war trend in French film-making. If the film is about something larger than *l'amour fou,* it might well be (as Pialat has himself suggested in interview) the present-day class-gap, whereby Parisians of different financial means are no longer likely to be inhabiting the same quarters, frequenting the same bars.

ONE WONDERS, then, who is out of their element in the opening scene, where wilful Nelly — bored stiff after three years with André — lets herself be picked up by Loulou in a blaring disco. But certainly there are key-scenes where men from alien backgrounds eye each other curiously — a beautifully played one in which Nelly's courteous and amiable brother tries to persuade Loulou into some sort of work (since his sister is now pregnant) for when the baby comes, proposals dismissed with phlegmatic contempt by Loulou once he has left; and another, in a café after a futile bit of street-scrapping, with a distraught André trying to act man of the world before an amused Nelly and a lumpishly indifferent Loulou. Depardieu, of course, can play this sort of shit simply by squinting down his sardonic nose, turning a slab of cheek towards the camera, and his Loulou is in no doubts as to where his attraction lies, taking a swift peek at it under the sheets when no one (except us) is looking, mumbling — somewhere between pride and ruefulness — 'She loves my cock, like the others'. As indeed she does. Pestered by the excellent Marchand's André, who insists on turning the knife in his own wound, Huppert's merry and tormented Nelly lets him have it: 'He never stops, if you want to know.'

But Huppert's incredibly mobile face is asked to cope with a considerable range of feeling. Her straight, acknowledged lust is tempered by affection, concern for her abandoned lover (with whom she has a quick, return bedding), worry about her new man's vague promise of getting a job. She has been keeping him with cheerful insouciance and clearly relishes the moment-to-moment irresponsibility of his seedy circle of old girl friends and petty crooks, even joining the men on a raid on a warehouse. It is after the film's most lengthy set-piece, a sprawling, incident-packed Sunday lunch with Loulou's family and hangers-on in the country (made peculiarly intimate by the closeness the camera maintains to faces at the oyster-cluttered, al fresco table), that this carefree Nelly has doubts. Without pause, the story cuts to the aftermath of an abortion, Loulou's unbought anger at her lack of trust, her supporting his weaving body home from a bar. It is perhaps inappropriate to talk of performances where Pialat's procedures seem so artless in a high sense, the effects so effortlessly produced and conveyed, but everyone on screen is established with the plangency of truth, each character has its distinctive spoor. It is an art of gauged distances, purged of false emotion, instinct with vitality, living on quick connections.

'GOD DOESN'T pay so good, Pop,' explains Neil Diamond huskily to Lord Olivier early on in *The Jazz Singer.* Jess Robin *né* Yussel Rabinovitch is trying to prepare his ageing father, Cantor Rabinovitch, for his eventual escape from the synagogue to a career of artistic and financial fulfilment as a pop singer. And it

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comes to pass that pussy-faced Mr Diamond, after a bearded year on the road, a divorce and paternal disfavour, marries Lucie Arnaz, has a baby with her and sings one of his own compositions, the richly ethnic 'America', to a packed auditorium that includes a moist-eyed and applauding Lord Olivier. Apart from a raftful of Neil Diamond songs, which those who enjoy that sort of thing will enjoy, there is the solitary presence of Lucie Arnaz to provide some seconds of snappy relief. I don't recall the 1953 Danny Thomas re-make of the Jolson original, but it can hardly have been sillier than this. It is also the kind of occasion where racial ease is communicated by Jess/Yussel repeatedly telling a black musician buddy of his to get a good sun tan out there in California. Richard Fleischer directed, a statement that increasingly loses meaning.

My Bodyguard centres around the problems encountered by a fairly agreeable rich kid (Chris Makepeace), son of a big Chicago hotel manager, when he enters the thuggish democracy of high school as a sophomore. This 15-year-old Cliff finds a taller lad with slicked-back hair — always a bad sign — is running a so-called protection racket; Cliff has the bright notion of enlisting the even taller classmate (Adam Baldwin), against whom he is supposedly being protected, as his bodyguard. Some of the playing of the adolescents has charm and a little edge but the macho denouement ('I broke his nose!' exults Cliff) is displeasing and the appearance of Ruth Gordon as Cliff's drunken, nymphomaniac granny an outright horror. This is a lady who has done the state of entertainment some service: it is high time she did it a last one by leaving it. □

THEATRE

Benedict Nightingale

Hellish debate

Man and Superman by SHAW *Olivier*
Moving by STANLEY PRICE *Queens*
Touched by STEPHEN LOWE *Royal Court*

Shaw called *Man and Superman* 'a trumpery story of modern London life', and might have been ruder, given the play's dated devices and shameless implausibilities. There's a bizarre will, putting the heroine in the charge of the man she eventually weds, a love-chase through Europe, a kidnapping by brigands, a rescue, and, as sub-plot, a clandestine marriage, made necessary by the rich and difficult father of everyday melodrama. And yet, of course, nothing is what it seems. The brigands are political thinkers; the heavy father a social eccentric who wants his son to make a 'misalliance', and is reconciled to the match, not by his daughter-in-law's purity and sweetness, but by her business acumen; it's the woman who pursues the man to Spain, rather than vice versa, and she who rescues him, she who manoeuvres, bullies, cheats and compromises him into a marriage that's seen as a triumph for her, a defeat for him. Everywhere romantic expectations are excited, only to be subverted.

And Shaw's scepticism, his debunking glee, extends to Shaw himself. He claimed that Jack Tanner, his hero, was based on the socialist H.M. Hyndman; but his contemporaries knew better. Desmond MacCarthy observed that Granville Barker, who created the part, looked 'as much like Mr Shaw as possible, with a red beard and Mephistopholean eyebrows', and Walkley of *The Times* added that he intermittently combed the beard with his fingers, a Shavian mannerism. Shaw had, after all, recently got married himself, after a bachelorhood as resolute as Tanner's, and many of Tanner's unorthodox opinions were known to be Shaw's own. As much to the point, Tanner was again and again exposed as what Shaw was often accused of being, a brilliant waffler, a dazzling fool and emotional ignoramus, who might amuse or annoy but was too often wrong to be taken seriously. It must have seemed as if Shaw were deliberately sending up his own rebelliousness, his perverse, busybodying and garrulous temperament.

Deliberately, yet not straightforwardly. The play isn't just a satiric self-portrait, nor a Shavianised romance, nor even a humorous paradigm of the continuing battle between the sexes; Tanner himself is acute as well as myopic, and, we're asked to believe, something of a misunderstood visionary as well. Hence the relevance of the two-hour dream-debate, *Don Juan in Hell,* given a rare airing by Christopher Morahan's production at the National. In this, too, all is Shavian topsyturveydom. Hell is a place of romance, beauty and self-indulgent happiness, heaven the home of the 'masters of reality', restless, dissatisfied people struggling to become 'omnipotent, omniscient, and withal completely unilludedly self-conscious'. Tanner, transformed into the lover who never found fulfilment in love, is there to reject one for the other, to explain why, and (it seems) to be taken very seriously indeed. Shaw pretty much meant it when he called the play-within-the-play 'a book of Genesis for the Bible of the Evolutionists', expression of a 'new religion'.

THE TROUBLE is that Creative Evolution, with its emphasis on the intellect and will, its faith in the genius-leader, its scorn for the 'greasy commonplaces' of flesh and blood, now seems to tell us more about Shaw than the universe. The Devil is only too prescient when he warns Don Juan that pursuit of the superhuman may lead to contempt for the merely human. There, in the dreaming Tanner's ringing metaphysic, is a forewarning of the Shaw who derided democracy, admired Mussolini and Stalin, advocated the extermination of social undesirables, from the work-shy to the mentally handicapped, and consistently under-reacted to evil and suffering, shrugging off even Belsen and Auschwitz as minor errors on the road to intellectual perfection. And yet this isn't the whole story, and certainly wasn't in 1905, before the armchair revolutionary's cerebral bloodthirstiness, his willingness to subordinate means to evolutionary ends, had become entrenched. There is, too, an eloquent distaste for the conventional and pig-witted, a catching faith in the possibility of change and progress, a fine, crusading commitment to self-improvement and social responsibility.

Modern feminists won't like the idea that such 'moral passions' are the expressions of a distinctively male 'life-force', whose female counterpart and enemy is the desire for a husband and children; but, if they're to enjoy the play at all, they'll simply have to lump it, perhaps reminding themselves that the greatest of Shaw's supermen was actually a superwoman, St Joan. The question here is whether, and how much, *Don Juan* justifies its inclusion in the play proper. Does it give Tanner's tussle with Ann Whitefield the larger, more mythic significance Shaw wanted, or, as some have suggested, does *Man and Superman* end by trivialising *Don Juan*? The answer surely is, a bit of both. *Don Juan* elaborates Tanner's ideas and ensures we take him and his emotional fate rather more seriously. *Man and Superman* itself tends to mock the intellectual pretensions of *Don Juan,* demonstrating that only in an imaginary world, free from the pressures of reality, can Tanner's theory survive intact. He wins the dream-debate, but loses the sexual battle itself. *Don Juan* is the thesis, *Man and Superman* the mundane evidence that challenges that thesis.

In other words, the interpolation of *Don Juan* produces a richer, more complex play, one which leaves us with conflicting feelings. Tanner's ideals have been dented, but so have his complacency and emotional folly; he has lost himself, he has the opportunity to find himself in a new way; marriage may mar him, and may make him: Shavian man earnestly and entertainingly reassessing himself. The National was right to give us the whole mind-bending, bum-eroding lot, and fortunate to attract a cast that removes gratuitous pain from both experiences: Daniel Massey, with his flamboyant beard, gestures and vowels, a posturing but by no means contemptible Tanner, and a

Ted Hughes

Goose

The White Bear, with smoking
mouth, embraces
All the North.
The Wild Goose listens.

South, South —
the Goose stretches his neck
Over the glacier.

And high, high
Turns the globe in his hands.

Hunts with his pack from star to star.
Sees the sun far down behind the world.

Sinks through fingers of light, with apricot
breast
To startle sleeping farms, at apple dawn,
With iceberg breath.

Then to and fro all Christmas, evening and
morning,
Urging his linked team,
Clears the fowler's gun and the surg angler.

Homesick
Smells the first flower of the Northern Lights —

Clears the lamb's cry, wrestles heaven,
Sets the globe turning.

Clears the dawns — a compass tolling
North, North,
North, North.

Wingbeat wading the flame of evening.

Till he dips his eyes
In the whale's music

Among the boom
Of calving glaciers

And wooing of wolves
And rumpus of walrus.

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much more sombre Don Juan; Penelope Wilton's *Ann*, amusingly po-faced in public, openly predatory when no one's looking; Michael Bryant, an aloof, smirking Devil; Anna Carteret, Timothy Davies, Basil Henson. And Ralph Koltai's set, a vast expanse of kitchen foil on to which gashes of green, orange and white are intermittently reflected, proves as serviceable as it's exquisite to look at.

'MOVING' revives, with due adjustment made for economic inflation and sexual liberation, a style of drama prevalent in the Crippsian era, all about the terrible woes that were being pluckily and amusingly faced by the privileged classes. This time, it's about the sheer hell of trying to flog a town-house for £85,000. A second, better Stanley Price can be dimly sighted at times, making vaguely serious gestures from deep within; but it's the superficial Price who prevails, producing what it's kindest to call an opportunity for Penelope Keith and Peter Jeffrey, twin somebodies from the small screen, to display their talents for rueful comedy in ampler surroundings. A much solider evening is to be had at *Touched*, favourably reviewed by me at Edinburgh three years ago, but so glancingly seen in London that revival is fully justified.

It's one of several contemporary plays dedicated to reminding us of the political hopes our generation has nurtured and the disillusion it has endured; but different both in the precision of its emotional chronology, the 100 days from Victory in Europe to Hiroshima, and in the quiet sensitivity with which it evokes character and community. Marjorie Yates, one of those players whose unsung excellence demonstrates the depth of our theatre's acting talent, is the woman who finds that even her pregnancy is phantom, and ends as numb and bleak as the world she inhabits. Stephen Lowe should, I think, cut 90 per cent of the occasions in which she rabbits dizzily on about the promised 'new world'; but, that over-emphasis aside, he has written an unpretentious yet striking play. □

TELEVISION

Julian Barnes

Cold comfort

'IT'S NOT your point of view I dislike, Howard, it's you.' Did anyone notice the nationwide chanting and stamping of feet at about 11 o'clock last Sunday night, when tubby, accident-prone Henry squirmed in his hospital bed and delivered the people's verdict to Howard Kirk? *The History Man* (BBC-2) may not elicit response over the whole range of the emotional spectrum, but where it operates it works at full power. Bradbury's characters amuse, they depress, they occasionally terrify, but they rarely move. They divide, not into sheep and goats, but into weaklings and shits; they are pinned like butterflies, and the coldness with which they are anatomised holds one back (intentionally, no doubt, on the author's part) from the fullest response. Even Miss Callender, on whom we were falsely invited to pin our hopes, is finally subverted by Bradbury as she is seduced by Kirk: she is frostily — and rather cheaply — exposed as sexually timorous, as if to say, that's all *she*'s about really.

ACTING, design, adaptation — all conspired impressively to externalise for television the bleakly-lit interior world of the novel. It's a world in which those who 'travel free', in Kirk's closing formulation — a hip-swivelling cliché but one both appropriate and truthful — go furthest and suffer the least damage. I've seen interpretations of *The History Man* recently in which Howard is said to get his come-uppance at the end, to be exposed as a character pathetically unable to love. This seems a hopeful reading, to say the least, of 'the radical's radical'. Kirk may well be unable to love, but he doesn't need or miss it, and his lack isn't our triumph. Bradbury's intention surely isn't to make us feel pity, or even superiority, towards Kirk for his lovelessness; but to present a more real world, where shits prosper and, in Howard's words, 'There is no such thing as *fair*'. In a heartlessly unalterable world you either win (and vote for Mrs Thatcher in later years), or, like Henry and Barbara, you start attacking the windows with your wrists.

'Goodness, boy, if you don't like things, alter them; and if you can't alter them, put up with them.' Not old Mrs Kirk to infant Howie, but Gertrude Morel to her youngest, brawling son.

Trevor Griffiths's adaptation of *Sons and Lovers* (BBC-2) — despite the ominous 'Twentieth-Century Fox Coproduction' sticker at the end — has so far proved rich and faithful, partly because it is camped round a stunning central performance by Eileen Atkins: all pinched face, possessiveness, inadequate diet and remembered gentility. Excellent support from Karl Johnson (sunken-visaged and wolfish, a well-found son to Miss Atkins's Gertrude) and Tom Bell, hawking beastliness one minute, stiff-limbed politeness the next, and every so often producing an eerie, haunting, back-of-the-throat hiss-cum-growl: the sound of a man frustrated and outwitted by words.

Lawrence month also gave us *The Trespassers*, previewed on *The South Bank Show* (LWT). Alas, it proved creaky, flatulent and painfully self-explanatory, with silvery-moontime shots puzzlingly lit by the blue lamp of some nearby police station. This was the Lawrence of rhetoric and picnics and nude bathing. 'The sun, the sky, the sea, and us here,' murmered a recumbent clifftop Alan Bates. Shortly afterwards there was a commercial break entirely taken up with similarly-worded advertisements for foreign holidays. Were they tipped off?

'MY MOTHER used to look at me sometimes and burst into tears — which somehow gave me a sense of independence.' A sturdier adolescent philosophy than that of Paul Morel, spoken by the week's benign curio, artist Sam Smith. *Arena* (BBC-2) devoted the first half of its programme to this wry, very English maker of comic wooden figures. Unfazed by the camera, lurching slightly and looking like a brother of Bernard Miles, Smith talked us through his childhood — in which his favourite shop 'smelt of elderly sheep' — and his delightfully puckish work. About the latter he displayed the self-mockery of true maturity:

> If I can give my heart to something that's going to be thrown away, I think that's the sign of something civilised. I think it's really worthwhile doing the unnecessary with love.

The second half of *Arena* (why is the interval given over to that patronising What's On guide: all Pathé News voice and condescending script?) brought us another example of English eccentricity: Chris Orr, who makes busy, funny, quite rude prints. We learned less about Orr's work than about Smith's, though it was hard to say whose fault this was. The artist seemed temperamentally anarchic, and spent a lot of time either playing with a large train-set, or taking his extremely shabby toy polar bear for walks along the canal bank.

Among this week's incidental discoveries was the fact that my distant cousin Boogie Barnes wrote the lyrics for the Murraymints commercials ('Too good to hurry-mints . . .'). This emerged during a lively edition of *Omnibus* (BBC-1) devoted to the early days of ITV adverts.

It also threw up an unlikely precursor to Sir Robert Mark, René Cutforth and Lawrie McMenemy in Compton Mackenzie: the canny novelist shamelessly puffed Horlicks, whose narcoleptic effects, he maintained, were central to his creative powers. A more predictable source of inspiration was spelt out for us on *Russell Harty* (BBC-2) by the choreographer of Hot Gossip; she revealed that a major source of her ideas was the repellent sado-photographer Helmut Newton.

And so to the quote of the week. There was strong competition from that American hostage who said No, captivity hadn't affected him in the slightest, he just thought America ought to send in the B-52s and raze the place to the ground. He had to defer, though, to Rupert Murdoch, poised to send his own middle-management B-52s into New Printing House Square. 'Will you sack staff?' he was asked on *Newsnight* (BBC-2), and his reply must have sent the chilled sweat oozing into the pinstripes of Gray's Inn Road: 'No — we'll be negotiating demanning.' □

Among this week's contributors:

GLYN FORD works at the University of Manchester on the social aspects of science.

BEN OKRI is the author of *Flowers and Shadows*, published by Longman at £1.25 and reviewed in the *NS* of 19/26 December.

NICOLAS WALTER is editor of the *New Humanist*.

Weekend competition

No 2653 **Set by E.O.Parrott**

Sixteen lines of verse, please, of which the first is 'How pleasant to know Mrs T.', to arrive by 13 February.

No 2650 **Set by Dan Kavanagh**

Advertising songs and jingles to raise the status of the British carrot.

Report **By Fat Jeff**

What an outpouring of adoration for the golden cone! The great E.O. was quick to seize the obvious rhyme:

> I will tell you what my guess is:
> All my yesses, my successes
> Come from the carrot
> Says E.O.Parrott.

Gerard Benson enclosed a fetching coloured drawing of the veg in question, while David Jordan's entry was set in four-part harmony ('could be orchestrated if desired'). Congrats to

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all concerned, four quid to Parrott (got to keep him on his toes) and a fiver for each entry printed below.

The lady takes *The Times* and *Vogue*,
Wears Dior dresses, Gucchi shoes,
Puts fresh-cut flowers round her room
And lots of carrots in her stews.

A moss-green Volvo, morning walks,
And holidays in Guadeloupe;
Long winter evenings by the fire
With Proust and cream of carrot soup.

Raw carrots on a summer lawn,
Champagne, a Gioconda smile;
Glazed carrots in a silver dish
For Sunday lunch. They call it style.

WENDY COPE

Don't be sick as a parrot —
Eat an English carrot!
It's patriotic
And erotic,
Long and lean with a sprig of green,
Native not exotic.
Carrots from Holland are mean and small,
French ones taste of nothing at all,
But if you want to savour
A truly sexy flavour,
Buy a pound,
Get your mouth around
The carrot to make you feel skittish
That's British!

BASIL RANSOME-DAVIES

Girls, you'd impress your favourite man
Gastronomically? You can!
First serve a sparkling carrot wine —
Chez Toi, 1979;
Then, for starters, carrot juice
Alongside creamy carrot mousse;
Complement the meat or fish
With glazed young carrots, or the quiche
With freshly-grated fragrant carrot,
Together with a carrot claret:
And what more pleasant with the coffee
The caramelised carrot toffee?

MAY DAY

You can dice them, you can slice them,
You can cube them, you can rice them,
You can juice them, you can cut them in a wedge.
You can store them in your cellar,
You can nosh them *a capella*,
Yes, the carrot's a most versatile veg.
You'll keep thinner and appealing
With night vision so revealing
That you'll see your lovers glowing in the dark.
Or if you prefer a matinée
Then serve your carrots gratiné,
You'll be the hottest thing since Joan of Arc.

JOAN VAN POZNAK

Wouldn't you prefer a veg that isn't green?
And can you be sure an aubergine is clean?
You wouldn't catch a Frenchman in a sporran —
Why not try a brighter bite which isn't forran?
It's at home sweet home we Brits begin our charity —
And the great thing 'bout a carrot is, it's Carrotty!

BILL GREENWELL

Eat a carrot for a lark:
You can see when all is dark,
And believe me, there is plenty to be seen:
If you want to have some kicks,
Take a carrot to the flicks,
And enjoy what's happening off the silver screen!

WILL BELLENGER

Carrot, carrot, burning bright
Like a doodah in the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Framed thy Freudian symmetry?

RUPERT SINGLETON

Tony Miles

Chess

No 215 **Eventful candidates' final**

The final of the candidates' series between Hübner and Korchnoy was a remarkably eventful affair. The West German grandmaster took the lead in the first game — incidentally the first time Korchnoy had trailed in a candidates' match since his loss to Karpov in 1974! — but it was short-lived. Korchnoy won the second. Hübner again went ahead in the fourth game but again Korchnoy equalised immediately.

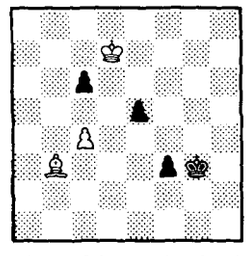
The seventh game was the turning point. Hübner rapidly established a winning position but let it slip. Then, still standing a little better in an endgame, he blundered away a rook in ridiculous fashion. The eighth game was drawn. The next two were both adjourned, one favouring Korchnoy, the other drawish. At this stage, theoretically only halfway through the match, Hübner went to Korchnoy and told him that he intended to resign the match. Korchnoy apparently tried to dissuade him but the next day he really did resign. His reasons are not clear, though such an action is not unusual for him. In his previous appearance in the candidates' series he resigned a match against Petrosian when only one point behind in protest against the playing conditions. This time, though, he had already commented favourably on them.

So the world championship will again be between Karpov and Korchnoy.

Korchnoy's play has undoubtedly suffered to some extent due to his exclusion from the top international tournaments and he no longer seems the force he was three years ago so he must start as the underdog. However, his obsession with the world championship is sure to give him immense motivation and it remains to be seen what effect this will have.

White: V. Korchnoy **Black: R. Hübner**

1.P-QB4, P-QB4; 2.P-KN3, N-QB3; 3.N-KB3. Already a slightly new idea. White ensures that he can play P-Q4 before Black gets in . . . P-KN3 and . . . B-N2. **3 . . . P-KN3; 4.P-Q4, PxP; 5.NxP, B-N2; 6.N-B2, N-B3; 7.B-N2, 0-0; 8.N-B3, P-Q3; 9.0-0, B-Q2; 10.P-N3 , Q-B1; 11.B-N2, B-R6; 12.R-N1, R-Q1; 13.P-K4, BxB 14.KxB, P-K3; 15.R-K1, P-QR3; 16.N-R4, R-N1; 17.R-QB1, Q-Q2; 18.Q-B3, Q-K2; 19.N-K3, N-Q2; 2-.BxB KxB; 21.Q-K2, P-KR4; 22.R(K)-Q1, N-B4; 23.N-B3, Q-B3; 24.P-B3, P-QN4; 25.PxP, N-Q5; 26.Q-KB2, NxP(N5); 27.N-K2, N-R6; 28.N-Q4, QR-B1; 29.Q-K2, P-Q4?** An oversight, though White had a small but persistent advantage. **30.P-K5! QxP.** 30. . . . Q-K2 was unpleasant as White would have a clear advantage thanks to his dominant N on Q4, but this loses material. **31.N(K3)-B5ch! K-B3; 32.QxQch, KxQ; 33.N-K7, P-R4; 34.NxR, RxN; 35.R-B3, K-Q3; 36.P-B4, P-B3; 37.R(1)-QB1, R-B2; 38.P-QN4!** A neat finish. If 38 . . . PxP; 39.RxN(R6), PxR; 40.N-N5ch wins a whole rook. **38 . . .N-R3; 39.P-N5.** Resigns.

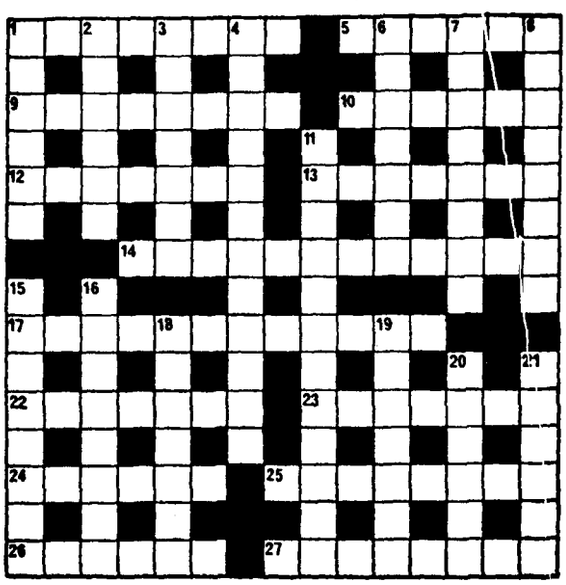


Problem 215
White to play. How should the game go? Answers to me at the NEW STATESMAN postmarked no later than 11 February.

Solution to problem 213
1. . . P-B3! 2.QXP, R-QB6! 3.Q-Q5, R-B4! .Q-Q2 (if Q-N7 or R8, B-B7 wins) RxB! Resigns.

Weekend Crossword 1371

PRIZES: Book tokens of £2 for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Crossword 1371, New Statesman, Great Turnstile, London WC1V 7HJ, by first post 10 February.



ACROSS

1 Monuments have footnote about saint returning with fish (8)
5 Plough bird (6)
9 The dog I put down is a boxer (8)
10 Legal process which puts one in danger (6)
12 Learning and sober love for school (7)
13 Flexible although in existence in the last ice age (7)
14 Coastal place where the wine account includes something dry (8,4)
17 The old man has gone astray in a shabby raincoat (12)
22 Slander as in itself (7)
23 What art is involved in an 'across' clue (7)
24 Provides exercise but is boring (6)
25 High point of small vessel holding fifty (8)
26 Document for dealer in unwanted material (6)
27 Ancient heroine opposed to the past (8)

DOWN

1 People under instruction make a mistake climbing (6)
2 'Things without all remedy Should be without —' (*Macbeth*) (6)
3 Of mixed parentage, but married into the upper-class and so ending in total confusion (7)
4 Not satisfied with record about campers? (12)
6 Composer who makes emotion come down to earth (7)
7 Grow your own in Scotland although it is a weed (8)
8 A cad involved with liars or politicians (8)
11 Although not a repair it involves being sent home (12)
15 One of the holed vessels which go aground together? (8)
16 Preventing the second being superior to the first-rate (8)
18 Animal found in stream in part of India (7)
19 It sounds like a rough home for African people (7)
20 No chap changes name (6)
21 If he went away the goddess would appear unusually neat (6)

SETSQUARE

Solution to No 1370

A	C	C	L	A	I	M	■	S	H	I	N	D	I	G
L	■	A	■	D	■	O	■	I	■	N	■	A	■	I
L	I	B	E	R	A	T	E	D	■	N	I	L	E	S
O	■	I	■	I	■	H	■	E	■	U	■	L	■	E
W	I	N	I	F	R	E	D	■	M	E	N	I	A	L
E	■	■	T	■	R	■	F	■	N	■	A	■	L	■
D	A	M	P	■	S	W	O	R	D	■	D	A	N	C	E
■	O	■	B	■	E	■	A	■	O	■	C	■	■	■
C	A	N	C	E	L	L	I	N	G	■	H	E	R	O
H	■	S	■	T	■	L	■	C	■	S	■	■	■	E
A	V	I	A	R	Y	■	D	I	T	H	E	R	E	D
P	■	G	■	A	■	I	■	S	■	R	■	O	■	I
L	A	N	K	Y	■	B	A	C	K	I	N	G	U	P
E	■	O	■	E	■	I	■	A	■	F	■	E	■	U
T	I	R	A	D	E	S	■	N	A	T	U	R	E	S

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The Research Officer will be one of two posts responsible to the Head of Research, and will be expected to contribute to the work of the Department in all areas as required. The subjects covered by the Department include pay, health and safety, personnel management, public expenditure, computers, new technology, etc. The Research Officer will take primary responsibility for the service in some of these areas, working to the Senior Secretariat. One priority of the Research Department for the next few months is policy work on Health and Safety, but applicants will be expected to be able to deal with any of the above subjects.

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The General Secretary, Society of Civil and Public Servants, 124/130 Southwark Street, London SE1 0TU.

By 6 February 1981

Enclosing full CV including details of education, employment, and trade union experience. Applicants should give a day time telephone number for contact purposes. Interviews for short listed candidates will take place on

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Theatres

ALDWYCH THEATRE Royal Shakespeare Company 836 6404. Recorded booking info 836 5332. cc 379 6233 Peter Nichols' 'Passion Play' and 'The Suicide' by Nikolai Erdman. RSC also at The Warehouse (836 6808) in 'Naked Robots' by Jonathan Gems, 'The Irish Play' by Ron Hutchinson and 'Television Times' by Peter Prince. RSC also at Piccadilly Theatre in Willy Russell's hilarious 'Educating Rita'.

NATIONAL THEATRE. 928 2252. Olivier (open stage): 'The Life of Galileo', 'Hiawatha', 'Amadeus', 'Sisterly Feelings'. Lyttelton (proscenium stage); 'The Provoked Wife', 'The Browning Version'/'Harlequinade'. Cottesloe (small auditorium) prevs from 5 Feb. 'The Ticket-of-Leave Man'. See daily press for dates & times or ring recorded information 928 2256.

OLD VIC. 928 7616. cc 261 1812 'S'. Until 14 Feb. Mon.-Sat., eves. 7.30, Wed. & Sat. 2 p.m. 'The Relapse' by Sir John Vanbrugh.

THEATREGOERS – please note: cc – credit cards; S-Student standby.

Cinema

SCREEN ON THE HILL 435 3366 (opp. Belsize Park Tube). Woody Allen's 'Stardust Memories' (AA). 3.20, 5.15, 7.10, 9.15. Ring 435 9787.

Meetings

TELEVISION DRAMA DOCUMENTARY

A day school to be held in London.

Sat. 21 Feb. 10 a.m.-7 p.m.

£6.00. Organised by the Society for Education in Film and Television. The school will examine this controversial television form. Details:

SEFT, 29 Old Compton St, London W1.

ADLERIAN SOCIETY. Mr Lasglo Szabo will speak on 'Conflict Solving' followed by a discussion 7.30 p.m. Tues. 3 Feb. Refreshments from 7.15. Community Rooms, Millman St (east side) London WC1. Visitors welcome 50p (students 25p).

RAMAKRISHNA VEDANTA CENTRE Sunday lectures on religion and philosophy. Enquiries 06285 26464.

THEOSOPHY: S.a.e. for pamphlets, book list, programme of activities. Public Talk Sun. 1 February 8 p.m. 'The Logic of Karma'. ULT, 62 Queen's Gardens, London W2 3AL.

TESSA BLACKSTONE, Professor of Education, speaks on 'Priorities in Education' 7.30 p.m. Wed. 4 Feb. Central London Fabian Society meeting at Mary Ward House, 5 Tavistock Place, London WC1. All welcome. Further details: Helen Price 01-870 2233 (office hours).

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON, Gower St, WC1E 6BT. Lunch-Hour Lectures, 1.20 to 2. Botany Theatre. 3 Feb. 'Fitzgerald's Omar Khayyam in Hebrew Dress' by Mr R. J. Loewe; 5 Feb. 'They Caught the Ferry'. Film directed by Carl Dreyer; 'Por Primera Vez'. Film directed by Octavio Cortazar.

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON: The 1981 Creighton Lecture will be given by Professor A. D. Momigliano, KBE, Litt, FBA (All Souls College, Oxford, and Emeritus Professor of Ancient History, University of London) entitled: 'The Origins of Universal History' at 5.30 p.m., on Monday 2 February 1981 at the University of London, Senate House, (Beveridge Hall) Malet Street, London WC1E 7HU. Adm. free, without ticket. Academic Registrar.

Publications

BOOKS ON JAPAN, Far East; rare, secondhand, out-of-print. The Eastern Traveller Bookshop, 45 Burton Street, London WC1. Tel. 01-388 6080.

INDUSTRIAL HISTORY. Books bought & catalogues issued. A. C. Hall, 30 Staines Rd, Twickenham, Middx.

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